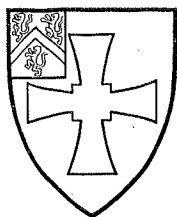


UNIVERSITY



OF DURHAM

RIDDELL MEMORIAL LECTURES

*Twenty-fourth Series*

# LANGUAGES STANDPOINTS AND ATTITUDES

BY

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GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

1953

Oxford University Press, Amen House, London E.C. 4

GLASGOW NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE WELLINGTON

BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS KARACHI CAPE TOWN IBADAN

Geoffrey Cumberlege, Publisher to the University



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, OXFORD

BY CHARLES BATEY, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

# I

## LANGUAGES AND STANDPOINTS

A RIDDELL MEMORIAL LECTURER is required by the terms of the Trust to speak on 'the relation between religion and contemporary developments of thought, . . . with particular emphasis on and reference to the bearing of such developments on the ethics and tenets of Christianity'. To one like myself, whose sphere of work is philosophy, this is a summons to high controversy. For it is evident, on the one hand, that there has been a close relation and interaction between philosophy and religion in Europe ever since pre-Christian times; but it is equally evident that the nature of this relation and the character and consequences of the interaction have greatly varied. We cannot even say that the relations between philosophy and religion have been uniformly friendly or the reverse. They have been both, according to the type of religion and philosophy involved. There is a kind of philosophy, critical in method and humanist or naturalistic in spirit, whose effect upon religion has often been destructive, and which religion for its own part has often felt bound to condemn. But there is another kind of philosophy, the so-called *philosophia perennis*, whose relations with religion have usually been more positive, varying from mutual tolerance to an active alliance.

It is of this that Hegel is thinking when he tells us that religion and philosophy have the same subject-matter, and differ only in their ways of dealing with it. That is true when philosophy is geared to metaphysical speculation, and when it is given complete freedom in assessing and interpreting religious ideas. It is true of that great system of religious and philosophical thought which is summed up in the Vedanta; in India, when religion and philosophy meet at all, philosophy is usually the senior partner. In the Western world, where Christianity takes an independent stand on the authority of a revelation which the Church alone may interpret, philosophy cannot achieve such a primacy as it has in India. Yet even here, in the main tradition of Christian thought,

the relation between philosophy and theology is a positive one. God, as supreme reality and supreme goodness, is the proper goal of philosophical inquiry. Philosophy knows only a little about him, but what it knows it knows for certain; and if theology tells us more, and with another kind of certainty, there is never a conflict between the two, unless through misunderstanding on one side or the other. On the contrary, philosophy paves the way for the acceptance of revelation by showing us both that we need it, and that it is likely to happen; and it gives us intellectual techniques which help us to analyse and clarify the content of revelation, when it has been received.

Such was the position in patristic and medieval times, when metaphysics, as a comprehensive science of being, dominated the philosophical scene. But today it dominates no longer. Where metaphysics survives today, it is with diminished claims, and it is increasingly a question whether it can ultimately survive at all. In any case, the crucial debates of philosophy no longer take place in that field, and the very question of its survival will depend on decisions to be reached in other branches of philosophical inquiry. What are these other branches? And how does their emergence as the real growing-point of philosophy affect the relations between philosophy and Christianity?

One aspect of the change may be brought out by saying that philosophy has become progressively less speculative and more critical in its aims and methods. Many of those who had most to do with bringing about the change would have described their aims in some such way as this. From another point of view we may say that the change has meant a regrouping of the philosophical disciplines about a new centre. Whereas in ancient and medieval times the centre of philosophy was metaphysics, the doctrine of being, which culminated in a doctrine of God, today the centre is man, and philosophy is a study of human life and behaviour from a peculiar point of view. Let us look, in turn, more closely at these two points.

1. Philosophy, we said, has become more critical. The first step in this direction was made in the fourteenth century, and followed up with vigour in the seventeenth and

eighteenth. This first step was made by logic and the theory of knowledge, and it consisted in saying that, before embarking on the discussion of problems about the nature of things, we should begin by testing the firmness of the foundations on which any solutions would have to rest. All statements about allegedly existing things must be based in the last resort on the evidence of experience; and they must be obtained from experience by reasoning in accordance with certain fundamental principles, such as the principle of causality. On what experimental evidence, then, do metaphysical statements rest? By what processes, in accordance with what principles, are they extracted from the primary data of sense-perception? And on what foundation do these principles themselves repose? Nay, more. If these questions can be asked about metaphysical propositions, they can be asked also about the statements which we make in science, and even in common-sense discourse. Logical and epistemological criticism, once launched upon its course, brings all these under review. It may begin as a limited inquiry into the credentials of metaphysics, but it ends as a comprehensive critique of everything that claims to be knowledge. The development of this critique on a really comprehensive scale is one great achievement of the early modern period in philosophy, the period from Descartes to Hume and Kant.

The nineteenth century lived on Kant's achievement, but the twentieth has gone a stage farther. It had to, because the critique had not come up to expectations. The logical and epistemological critique had been instituted with the hope that it would lead to a solution of those long-standing problems which metaphysics had never been able to solve, and would thereby put an end to the perpetual conflict of opinions in philosophy. The hope was disappointed. Not only did the critique not solve the metaphysical problems; it even brought in fresh ones of its own. The problem of our knowledge of the external world, for instance, was a particularly intractable by-product of epistemological reflection. What, then, was the disturbing factor which brought first metaphysics and afterwards epistemology to a standstill? Following a hint from mathematics, philosophy now seeks the source of its difficulties in the misuse of its symbols.

Semantics, or the theory of significant expression, takes its place among the philosophical disciplines; logic widens out to include the theoretical construction of languages and meta-languages; and the old metaphysical and epistemological problems are transformed by a fresh approach through the analysis of the language in which they are formulated.

Philosophy is not alone today in taking an interest in language. The problem of language is itself merely one part of the wider problem of significant utterances and actions and their meaning, a problem which concerns psychology as well as philosophy, and which, within philosophy, has a bearing on aesthetics as well as on logic and metaphysics. But the logician and the metaphysician are interested particularly in the function of language in intellectual work, and the way in which words, the tools of thought, can betray our confidence in them and become a source of error. In the past, despite our critical pretensions, we have not been cautious enough about this. We have not scrutinized closely enough the meaning of the things which we said. We have read wrong meanings into single words, and ascribed a false significance to grammatical and syntactical forms. From our present realization of this comes on the one hand the extension of logic in the direction of semantics, and on the other hand the practice of philosophical analysis, which by careful scrutiny of particular words and phrases undertakes to detect and remove the misunderstandings which have led us astray.

Such are the lines along which philosophy has moved in the modern period, becoming century by century less confident in construction and speculation, and more and more thorough-going in criticism. Development on these lines meant inevitably the dethronement of metaphysics from its one-time position in philosophy. When metaphysics was a body of generally recognized doctrine, sure of its credentials and claiming to describe the ultimate nature of things, it of course took the central place in philosophical interest. Logic led up to it, ethics drew practical conclusions from it, but the heart of philosophy was metaphysics itself, the science of being which was also the intellectual ladder to God. It cannot keep that position when its credentials are called in

question. Instead, the central place now belongs to that discipline whose business it is to examine the credentials of metaphysics (and of science, and of common sense): that is, to logic, or the theory of knowledge, or the theory of language, or all of these together. This was our first point.

2. Our second point was that, in these critical disciplines, what is really being studied is human behaviour, and that the triumph of critical philosophy really means the substitution of a doctrine of man for the doctrine of being as the heart and centre of philosophy. This is not to say that philosophy is becoming a kind of psychology. Though it is a study of man, it studies him by peculiar methods and with a purpose of its own. Any tendency towards 'psychologism', i.e. assimilating philosophy too closely to psychology, calls forth a strong reaction in the philosophical world. Nevertheless, in its own way and for its own purposes, critical philosophy is analysing human behaviour, and the ancient injunction, 'know thyself', could still be used as its motto.

The theory of knowledge, for example, takes man as a knowing subject, and tries to make out what he does when he perceives, imagines, and thinks. This certainly sounds at first like a psychological inquiry: how, by means of what processes, are perceiving, imagining, and thinking brought about? The theory of knowledge does seek answers to these psychological questions, but it does not stop there; it goes on to ask how these cognitive processes are related to objective reality and the apprehension of it. As a result we now realize, more fully than our predecessors in earlier centuries did, how busy and active we are in our knowing. Even perception, which to our immediate consciousness seems so simple, turns out to involve a great deal of constructing and interpreting. Still more, of course, does the building up of those complex logical structures which are the sciences. What we once took for given objects turn out on examination to be logical constructions. The world which we know is a world which, in knowing, we construct. Nothing can be known to us without being shaped and coloured by us in the knowing of it. And therefore not 'being', but man in his capacity as knower, is the central point of philosophy where epistemology prevails.

To approach metaphysical and epistemological questions by way of linguistic analysis is to take the further step from man as knower to man as speaker. The step is inevitable when once we realize how dependent our thinking is on the intuitable symbols (mostly words) in which it is conducted, and how easily it is thrown wrong by mismanagement of them. We need not press the psychological question, whether thought without language can in any circumstances occur. In any case it is plain that the thinking which we do in everyday life, in the sciences, in philosophy itself, the thinking on which all our knowledge of the world depends, is not of that kind. Nor is the use of language solely a device for communication. In solitude we talk to ourselves, in imagination if not in audible sounds, and we think with pen and paper. We should not be thinkers at all if we were not also users of language. So the figure of man the thinker fills out into the figure of man the speaker; and then we may remember that speech has other functions besides being a vehicle of intellectual processes, and that man the speaker is a poet as well as a scientist or a philosopher. So we reach the point where, as in Collingwood and other philosophers of his type, the theory of man as knower and speaker widens out into a *Kulturphilosophie*, a philosophy of the whole imaginative and intellectual life of man.

And, having come so far, can we refrain from going yet farther? Thinking and speaking do not take place in isolation from life; or if they do, they are a chimera buzzing in a vacuum, telling us nothing that is real or true. Thinking and speaking are part of life. They arise out of lived experience, and directly or indirectly they react upon it. They affect even our perceptions, by turning our attention towards one thing and away from another. But of course the principal way in which talking alters our experience is by leading us to take action, or to act in certain ways rather than in others, and so bring about changes in our environment. All life is a continual series of reactions, on the part of the living thing, to the surrounding world; and the life of an intelligent being is a continual pursuit of ends. Thinking and speaking, functionally considered, are simply a device for making us more wise, more prudent, and more efficient in

this pursuit. And therefore our imaginative and intellectual life is dependent for its stimuli on factors in our emotional and volitional life. Desires and fears awaken our attention, and turn it in one direction rather than another, and in so doing they influence our thought-constructions, our theories and discoveries. For although thought, while actually at work on its problems, must set aside all laws but those of logic, and think without fear or favour, the initial setting of the problems depends on what is holding our interest, and that is a consequence of desires and aversions. Thought is autonomous in the administration of its own province; but that is after all only one province in the wide realm of life, and in that realm thought is not sovereign, but only chief minister. Man the thinker and speaker is only one facet of man the purposeful.

What this means to us in the concrete will depend on yet a further consideration. What conception do we form of the purposeful activities of man, and what do we think is his governing purpose or type of purpose?

It is possible to think of human behaviour as being, at bottom, no more than a sustained effort to satisfy physical needs and to fulfil instinctive desires. For the achievement of such purposes, so far as they can be achieved in view of our limited resources and their own frequent mutual incompatibility, collective man has built up his vast economic, social, and political systems; and within these systems the individual makes his way through life as best he can, with the aid of such skills and such qualities of mind and character as may be his. The philosophical analysis of this aspect of life is utilitarianism; a philosophy of ends and means, the ends being taken as given by human nature and circumstances, and the problem of living being resolved into that of achieving as many of our ends as we can. What the utilitarian theory describes is a powerful reality. It is that form of collective human action which Hegel calls 'civil' or 'bourgeois' society (*die bürgerliche Gesellschaft*). It is a web of instinctive desires and prudential calculations, into which we are all caught up; and it is easy to show how it conditions and shapes, consciously or unconsciously, all or most of what we think, say, and do.

Yet prudential calculations in the service of instinctive desires are not the whole of our practical life. Man is capable of reflection, self-criticism, and self-discipline. Instead of taking his natural endowment of desires and tendencies as something fixed and unalterable, he sets himself to change it in accordance with his conception of an ideal pattern of life. As a result he is often faced with difficult and far-reaching choices. The tension between his own ideal and his existing character and impulses is responsible for some of them; he must either mortify certain things in himself, or lose in self-respect. But he has also to choose between rival ideals, rival principles which invite or claim his allegiance. Such a choice as this is in a manner a choosing of one's own future self, and is, and is felt to be, a matter of high moment. And in various ways, some of them open and obvious, others more subtle and profound, the making of such decisions influences our thoughts and actions far beyond their ostensible range of relevance. It is not merely a question of moral problems which we see clearly as such. The fundamental decisions are very often made unconsciously, and the way in which we have decided can only be known from the course which our overt life is taking.

If philosophy starts on the road which begins with the theory of knowledge and goes on to the theory of language, I believe it cannot stop short there, but must go on to reckon with the fact that human thinking is conditioned by human purposes. At the centre of philosophy will finally stand not man the thinker, nor man the speaker, but man the purposeful. And then much will depend on whether man the purposeful is conceived as a unit in the prudentially-guided satisfaction-seeking mass of humanity, or as an individual capable of questioning the assumptions of that human mass, and responsible before conscience for what he is and does. This is not, I think, the deepest question which arises in philosophy, but it is one which must be answered before the deepest question of all can be asked. The deepest question of all is this: granting that man *is* a free and responsible being, capable of choosing his own future self, what are the alternatives before him?

In view of these changes, what today is or should be the

relation between philosophy and Christianity? Clearly it can no longer be the same as it was when metaphysics was queen. It does not necessarily follow that there is no relation between them, or that it may not be a positive and friendly one as before, but the point of contact must be different. The link between metaphysics and religion lay in a common subject-matter, a common concern with God. Modern philosophy, whose concern is to make a critical study of human behaviour, will not produce a doctrine of God, but it will talk a good deal about religion, i.e. about that human activity which consists in believing in God and feeling, speaking, and acting in ways which depend on that belief. If it is logic, it will ask what kind of significance belongs to statements about God, and to what principles our reasoning about him conforms. If it is epistemology, it will ask what experiential foundation there can be for beliefs about God, how and from what source the concept of God is obtained. If it is linguistic theory, it will discuss the peculiar way in which words behave when used in this field. And if it is a philosophy of life and purpose, it will explore the various patterns of life which are consonant with the various beliefs and unbeliefs in this sphere, and without pronouncing, as philosophy, on the merits of the principal alternatives, it will endeavour to make visible what they are, and how the decision between them is important. It is here, not in the enunciation of a doctrine of God, but in the summons to radical decision, that modern philosophy will be found to have a theme in common with Christianity.

Such in brief is my answer to the question which is put to the Riddell Lecturer, and in this and the two following lectures I shall try to show more fully what it means. I shall trace the path which leads from epistemology and linguistic study to the further stages of reflection which I believe must follow.

We may begin by examining more closely both the critique of knowledge and the critique of language, and isolating one feature which they have in common. Both are concerned, directly or indirectly, with different ways of looking at things, different standpoints from which things can be regarded. Confusion of standpoints is the real cause of the

problems with which both these disciplines have to deal. The conception of a *standpoint*, to which they both lead us, will prove to be a convenient starting-point for our further explorations.

There are at most two types of statement which can be known for certain to be true. Tautological statements have this property. Empirical statements would have it too if they were *purely* empirical, i.e. if they did no more than describe what was actually present in the experience of the speaker while he was speaking. It may be doubted whether such statements really exist, whether it is possible to describe anything in words without some element of interpretation creeping in; but if pure empirical statements do exist, they are as certainly true as tautologies.

Neither of these types of statement goes far towards building up a system of knowledge about the existing world. Tautologies do not tell us that anything exists at all; and if, in giving verbal expression to our observations, we rigorously abstained from all forms of interpretation and inference, our observations would never come together into a system. We learn by linking things together, and that means not merely tracing links which are there to be seen, but divining a vast system of relations which lie beyond the range of observation. There cannot be a world, a *κόσμος*, unless there are some forms of relation between events which prevail throughout its extent and give it a structural unity. We cannot build up knowledge of a world, unless in our use of evidence we are guided by far-reaching principles which we take to be the formulae of its structure. Such formulae are, for example, the distinction between being and seeming, between being and having, the relation between cause and effect, the conception of a law of nature, and many others of this kind. They are everywhere to be met with in one form or another in philosophy, in science, in everyday thinking; we cannot think at all without using them. And yet philosophers are perpetually wrangling over their statement of these principles, and failing to agree upon a formulation of them which is at once accurate and exhaustive.

Such principles raise a logical problem. They are of no use unless we take them to be universally applicable, and yet

it is hard to find a logical justification for so taking them. They are not tautologies; and they can hardly be regarded as generalizations from experience, when it is only by applying them that we can obtain a coherent world of experience at all. If these two, viz. the appeal to pure logic and the appeal to experience, are the only ways in which a proposition can be logically grounded, the fundamental principles which we are now discussing must be without logical ground, and, although in real life we never think of them as conjectures, from a strictly logical point of view our acceptance of them must be regarded as a leap in the dark.

It was long before philosophy awoke to this fact. Aristotle and the twelfth- and thirteenth-century scholastics kept their eyes closed to it, and thought it enough to say that the first principles of our knowledge of things are apprehended by a pure intellectual insight. Ockham in the fourteenth century dragged the problem into the light; but he and his followers at that time were unable to resolve it in a positive way. Philosophy had to wait until Hume for an equally thorough study of the problem, and Kant was the first to point the way to a creative solution. By his analysis of the 'principles of the pure understanding' and his method of 'transcendental deduction' he pointed the way which must henceforth be followed by every philosophy which takes the problem of first principles seriously. His conclusions are open to objection, but we can find better ones only by pursuing farther the road on which he began.

The essentials of the Kantian solution are as follows. (1) It is shown that we could have no coherent body of experience if it were not for the 'pure principles' which we take as universally applicable, and which give structure to our world-scheme. (2) It is frankly acknowledged that these 'pure principles' are not justifiable ('deducible' in Kant's language) either on grounds of pure logic or on the evidence of experience. (3) Their justification is said to lie in the stark fact of their indispensability. If we do not accept them, we cannot think or make a single step towards knowledge of a coherent world; but if we accept them, they open up the possibility of indefinitely extended research. (4) It is argued that there can be, for human beings, only one set of principles which

has this liberating effect, and Kant shows in detail what they are, and how each contributes to the build-up of experience. (5) Thus there is constituted a body of assured philosophical knowledge about any world which the human intelligence can know; but it is knowledge of such a world as construed by us, not of its nature in so far as that is independent of our interpretations.

A suggestive attempt to go farther along Kant's road has been made recently by Collingwood. He agrees that we could have no coherent body of experience if it were not for certain 'absolute presuppositions' which we make, and by which all our thinking is guided. These 'absolute presuppositions' are Kant's 'pure principles', and Collingwood describes in his own interesting way how the making of such presuppositions renders it possible for questions to be asked and answered, and a system of knowledge built up. It is the business of metaphysics, he says, to tell us what these absolute presuppositions are in detail; metaphysics is by definition the science of absolute presuppositions. But he appeals to the evidence of history to show that there can be more than one set of such principles, and that different sets have in fact been held and applied by men in different places and times. The principles which Kant analysed were substantially those of the natural science of his day; but men in other periods worked with other principles and obtained other versions of the world order, nor has the structure of the scientific world-scheme remained quite the same from Kant's time to our own. Principles change, and world-schemes change with them, and metaphysics, the science of absolute presuppositions, is therefore an historical science.

We should like more guidance than Collingwood gives us on the question of *why* principles change, and on the related question of whether there is an objective criterion by which one set of principles can be judged to be preferable to another. Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions are neither true nor false, they simply are (or are not) presupposed, and it is only when absolute presuppositions are made that (not they, but) other verbal utterances can intelligibly be discriminated as true or false. But Collingwood recognizes, as an historian must, that some sets of presuppositions

have proved more fertile than others in opening up fields for inquiry, and he could hardly deny that the wide acceptance of the principles of modern physical science is due precisely to the great fertility of those principles over a very extensive field. If we say that a set of principles is justified, relatively to others, by its greater capacity to open up fields of experience, what is this but a restatement and development of Kant's argument? Kant thought that there is one set of principles, whose justification lies in the fact that they and they alone make experience possible. We on the other hand shall say that there are various possible sets of principles, all of which open up possibilities of experience and inquiry, and that that set which is most fertile in this respect is to be preferred.

Now, a set of principles or presuppositions, together with the type of question to which they give rise and the way of looking at things which results from them, is what I call a *standpoint*. At its heart is the assumption that there is an order of existing things, events, or relations whose structure is of a specified kind. The kind of structure which we ascribe to it will determine the kind of questions which we shall ask, and therefore also the methods by which we shall seek to answer them; e.g. the aims and methods of the study of the physical world will be different according as we assume that there are, or that there are not, discoverable final causes in nature. Furthermore, the aims and methods of our thinking have an effect on our perceptions too, directing our attention towards some things and away from others, so that we even see the world differently according to our interests and training. The basic assumption, the resulting aims and methods, and the way of seeing things to which these in turn give rise—all this together is what I mean to designate by the word *standpoint*. The basic assumption or presupposition need not be of a kind which can be expressed wholly in cognitive statements. It may include elements of value-judgement or volitional determination; for these too can be expressed as general principles and open up fields of discourse. It is by principles of this type that the field of ethical discourse is constituted.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A standpoint as here defined has much in common with a *Weltanschauung* as defined by Dilthey. The differences are two. A *Weltanschauung* is always



All differences between one type of inquiry and another, or between rival views in the same field of inquiry, are due to the taking up of different standpoints. A sociological analysis and a moral judgement may bear upon the same complex of actions, but because they approach it from different standpoints they discover different things about it. Within the one field of ethics, again, there is a difference of standpoint between the utilitarian and the Kantian. Every philosophical or religious system, every intellectual or aesthetic tradition, every civilization or culture, may similarly be seen as the embodiment of a distinctive standpoint.

Every standpoint tends to find expression in a characteristic language, in turns of phrase and elements of vocabulary which are peculiar to it. That it should do so lies in the nature of language itself. For words are not mere pointers, which indicate their object without comment. They also describe, and in describing they interpret; for, since no word can say all that is true about the object to which it refers, every description is selective, singling out for naming and emphasis some aspects of the thing at the expense of others, and sometimes also expressing and communicating an evaluative judgement. That is why, in a debate, a great deal can rest on the phrasing of the question; some things cannot be said in some types of language, and the language in which a question is put, and in which therefore an answer is demanded, can make it difficult for the answerer to say what he really means. Similarly those who are tied by habit to thinking in a particular terminology cannot understand (and will therefore usually despise) what is said in a different idiom. In short, a language is the expression of a way of looking at things, or standpoint. It can describe only what is visible from that standpoint, and only as it appears from that standpoint; and the use of the language imposes the standpoint on those who use it, so long as they continue to use it. Different languages represent different standpoints, and different standpoints require and generate different

a standpoint from which one regards the whole of experience, whereas standpoints in my sense can refer to a narrower field than that. Also, a *Weltanschauung* always includes valuational and preceptive elements, whereas a standpoint in my sense may, but need not, include such elements.

languages to be their vehicles. No standpoint can be understood by those who have not learned something of the appropriate language; and no statement can be properly understood except by entering into the standpoint from which it is made.

If every standpoint had a complete vocabulary peculiar to itself, what was said from one standpoint could not be taken as if it had been said from another. In real life, unfortunately, this kind of confusion is only too frequent. The same word, i.e. the same articulate sound or graphic sign, can function as an element in different languages, having different meanings in each, as each expresses a different standpoint. It is natural that this should be so, in view of the way in which language has developed. It is only in civilized countries, and only in certain circles even there, that a deliberate attempt is made to discover fresh standpoints, to exercise the mind in looking at things in different ways, and to find linguistic expression for these differences of view. On the other hand, there is one standpoint which is common to all human beings in full possession of their faculties, namely the standpoint of common sense, and it is this which finds expression in what is called 'ordinary language' the whole world over. Within this common-sense standpoint, it is true, there are minor differences of emphasis which find expression in, and are perpetuated by, the grammatical, syntactical, and lexicographical peculiarities of the various languages and language-families; and this is the field of philological study. Such differences are, however, of negligible importance in face of the massive agreement of mankind in the acceptance of the general principles of common sense. This is a tradition which we all inherit, a language which we all speak. When we proceed to take up the special standpoints of philosophy, science, and the like, we are consciously diverging from the accepted norm; but we carry over with us into those special disciplines a great deal of the language of common sense, which, when thus used in a new context depending on a different standpoint, can be the source of considerable confusion.

It is to this that philosophy owes some of its deepest and most intractable problems. Philosophy, like all the special

disciplines, borrows words from the vocabulary of common sense, changing their meanings where that seems necessary to fit them for their new role. If it always made changes where these were necessary, all would be well; but it sometimes happens that the words take control, and philosophy is sent off on a wild goose chase after meanings which are really not there. Vague words like 'force', 'power', 'necessity', which serve their purpose well enough in common speech (where they are not expected to be subjected to rigorous analysis), tease the philosophers with the thought that some more precise meaning is concealed within them, if only it could be more clearly elicited; and so philosophy goes looking for entities and relations which do not exist, merely because it has inherited words which are ostensibly the names of such entities and relations. Or again, the plain man's words and phrases are taken up, given a precise philosophical interpretation of which the plain man has no thought when he uses them, and quoted as evidence that the plain man takes a side in a philosophical controversy. For example the plain man will certainly agree that in his responsible actions he 'chooses' as a 'free agent' what he will do. But to take this sentence, interpreting 'choice' and 'freedom' in terms of a philosophical conception of indeterminacy, which is not in the plain man's mind, and so make the plain man appear to take a side in a metaphysical debate, is not legitimate; yet it is done daily.

A similar crop of difficulties, arising from a similar confusion of language, may be found in the history of philosophy between Descartes and Kant. Here the decisive factor was the adoption of new methods and principles in the natural sciences, involving a divergence from a previously accepted norm, which in this case was not that of common sense, but that of medieval philosophy. The new standpoint meant fresh ways of regarding nature and its processes, fresh distinctions to be drawn, a fresh pattern of relations to be explored, and for all this new terms were also needed, a new language to be the vehicle of the new science. What actually happened was that terms already in use, and shaped by centuries of philosophical discussion, were taken over and insensibly adapted to new uses and meanings. No one saw, at the

outset, how completely independent of philosophy natural science was to become, and therefore no one saw how great a linguistic breach would be needed. Words like 'matter', 'substance', 'energy', 'motion', 'cause', while retaining their old meaning for those who still moved in the thought-world of Aristotle, took on other meanings in the context of mathematical or experimental physics. Much of the metaphysical bewilderment of the seventeenth century is accounted for in this way. Two languages were confronting one another, the language of traditional metaphysics and the language of the new physics, and the two languages had their key-words in common. What appeared to the eye, therefore, was not a confrontation of two languages, but an irritating ambiguity in the words of what still seemed to be one language. The metaphysical battles of the seventeenth century are to be seen as the attempt of the philosophers to make up their minds how to use their key words. What shall we mean by 'substance' and 'cause' and the rest? Can we give them a meaning which does justice both to what the ancients were trying to say and to what the new science is telling us? As a result, systems arose whose use of traditional language gives them a deceptive air of conservatism. Doctrines which are at home in ancient and medieval writers are taken up and verbally reaffirmed in the new intellectual context; but they are developed to conclusions at which their original authors would have stared. With the eighteenth century comes a more radical approach to the problem. The question is asked, what intelligible meaning certain metaphysical terms *can* have. So we reach Hume's sceptical analysis, and Kant's masterful redefinition of the key words. So much trouble was caused by the attempt to think and speak from the new standpoint of science, while retaining the language which had been shaped to convey the metaphysical standpoint.

There is a yet subtler way in which language has bemused philosophers. Grammatical forms have been taken as evidence of ontological relations. Because facts can be described in sentences, it has been thought that the structure of a sentence reflects the structure of the existing world. Because the adjective is a distinct part of speech attached to the noun, it was thought that there are 'attributes' which are in some

way distinct from, though 'inhering in', 'substances'. Because common nouns and abstract terms play an indispensable part in speech, it was thought that there are 'universals' among the components of the world. Because the situation confronting one who has to make a decision can be described in a disjunction, it was thought that there are real indeterminacies and open alternatives in nature. Insoluble problems were thus created for metaphysics, merely because linguistic forms were misinterpreted into ontological theories. So much of metaphysics has consisted of errors like these, that many have come to think that metaphysics is nothing else but a misuse and misinterpretation of language.

The error in all these cases is the same: words and combinations of words are treated as if they contained answers to questions which are not in the minds of those who speak them. They are not understood from the standpoint from which they are spoken, and so they are misunderstood. The subject-predicate relation, the use of abstract terms, the disjunctive sentence, and many elements of the vocabulary of ordinary speech, are useful ways of conveying answers to the kind of questions with which common sense concerns itself, and a unit-sentence of common-sense discourse, taken as a whole, performs its function well enough. But it does not follow, and it is not true, that the grammatical structure of the sentence conceals a true theory about the structure of the world, and that every verbal element in the sentence, taken separately, is a symbol for a distinct element in the composition of the universe. If common sense could speak for itself, in face of these distortions, it would have to say: 'I was not thinking of that, or of anything like it; if you are going to treat what I say in that manner, I shall have to alter my ways of talking.'

The full realization of all this is a recent event in philosophy. True, the medieval debates about universals aroused in some minds a suspicion of how the matter stood. But, in spite of the radical questionings of the fourteenth century, the scholastics did not break through to an adequate understanding of the problem and its solution. That was perhaps impossible before logic had undergone a thorough reformation, and before the development of natural science and

mathematics had shown more fully what logical construction and also analysis can do. Today at last we see the magnitude of the problem, and philosophy is all set to deal with it. Two things are necessary. (1) Philosophy must make a thorough study of the function of words and other symbols, of the relation between the symbol and what it stands for, of grammatical and syntactical forms, of the relation between different language-levels and the conditions for adequate translation between them. The philosophical theory of language must take its place side by side with logic, or overlapping with it, in the scheme of the philosophical disciplines. (2) We must apply these insights to the solution of problems elsewhere in the philosophical field. Philosophy gets a great deal of its subject-matter from perplexities which arise in the course of ordinary life, or in the sciences, especially in those frontier zones where one science meets another, or one way of thinking about the world has to be brought into relation with another. The frontier, for example, between the common-sense view of the universe and modern physical theory, or that between scientific and moral ways of thinking, can be relied upon to give rise to problems, some of which are perpetually recurrent and constitute abiding problems for philosophy. Many such problems, as has been said, arise from the misuse of language, and are therefore to be resolved by detecting the mistakes about language from which they arise.

Not all philosophical problems arise in this way, from linguistic mismanagement, and therefore not all philosophical problems can be resolved by linguistic analysis. Even those which can be so resolved are not *merely* linguistic confusions, and are not removed by a *merely* verbal technique. In all this work, the philosopher is looking through the language to the standpoint which it expresses and in terms of which it is to be understood; for the criterion of significance for any language, and of truth for any statement made in that language, depends on the nature of the standpoint, or way of dealing with experience, which it embodies. Linguistic confusions are merely a symptom of confused standpoints. Deep, persistent errors and perplexities do not arise from language merely as such; it is a disorder of intellectual perspectives which sets the use of language wrong.

And therefore philosophy solves this kind of problem not by some verbal sleight, but by sorting out and co-ordinating perspectives. It is a labour of imagination, of understanding, and ultimately of will, as the two following lectures will show.

One thing in particular the philosophical theory of language cannot legitimately do: it cannot write off a particular language-type or mode of utterance as meaningless; it cannot even declare that one type of language, e.g. that of physical science, is inherently preferable to any other. It can no more do this than the theory of knowledge can dismiss a particular field of inquiry as illusory.

This sounds like a paradox. For have I not said that the theory of knowledge operated as a critique of knowledge, and had the effect of shaking confidence in metaphysics? That is true; but consider how limited are the range and powers of this critique. The theory of knowledge did not inform us that we possess knowledge. If we had not known that already, there would have been no theory of knowledge at all. It did not produce a hitherto unknown criterion of what constitutes knowledge; whence would it have obtained such a criterion, and with what authority? It made clear and explicit the criterion which we all use, but which we do not all analyse and formulate precisely; and, having done this, it was able to detect certain inconsistencies in our attitude to our various intellectual enterprises. The critique of knowledge consisted in pointing out that some of the things to which we were giving the name of 'knowledge' did not satisfy the criterion with which, on the whole, we seemed to be working. It summoned us to revise our judgements in the name of consistency, and to recognize that, if mathematics and physical science were the norm of knowledge, it was a norm which metaphysics did not satisfy. More by token, because we have not all the same paradigm of knowledge, because some of us regard with respect intellectual activities for which others have nothing but scorn, the epistemological critique could not bring us to an agreement. It could only clarify our disagreements. If your paradigm of knowledge was natural science, the critique could show that metaphysics does not conform to this standard. But it could not show that your paradigm of knowledge ought to be natural science.

It is the same with the theory of language. This does not inform us that we are able to speak meaningfully, as if we did not know that already. It has no authority to set up a standard of its own and judge by that what utterances are meaningful. Its business is to elicit the criterion of significance which we in fact use but do not analyse, to formulate it clearly, and to show if we are being inconsistent in our use of it, if we are recognizing, as really significant, utterances which by our own criterion ought to be dismissed as meaningless. And because, in real life, we have not all the same paradigm of significance, because some of us recognize as meaningful what appears to others to mean nothing, therefore the philosophical theory of language can do no more than define the point of disagreement, and leave us to debate it as best we can. For it ends by revealing a diversity of standpoints, and what is meaningful from one standpoint seems meaningless from another. To declare metaphysical sentences to be meaningful, or to be meaningless, is in either case to assert the standpoint from which such a judgement can be made. And the debate cannot be brought to a conclusion unless we find a way of judging the relative worth of different standpoints.

Is there a standpoint from which to judge the worth of standpoints? Is there a normative study of standpoints, which can present a reasoned case for preferring one standpoint to another? That we shall have to consider. But it is clear already that, if there is such a normative study, it is not the theory of language.

## THE DIALECTIC OF STANDPOINTS

MODERN philosophy began with two treatises on method, the *Novum Organum* of Bacon and Descartes's *Discours*; and from that day to this there has hardly been a philosopher of any note who has not made some contribution to the still-continuing discussion on method. *Mos geometricus*—the historical plain method—the transcendental method—dialectic in various senses—the positive method—analysis in various forms—these are some of the many ways which philosophy has been exhorted to follow, with a promise of success which is always falsified in the event.

Is not this a bad sign? If philosophy were in possession of a proper method, would it not set to work and apply it, producing results which philosophers would agree among themselves in recognizing as valid, and making progress from one generation to another? Does not this continual discussion of method amount to a confession that philosophy does not know how to go about its business? Does it not present a poor spectacle in face of the work that is done in natural science and even in historical research? Those who propound fresh methods for philosophy are often ready to answer all these questions in the affirmative. They only claim that the acceptance of their prescriptions will change the situation, and put philosophy on the 'sure path of a science' at last.

There is, however, a prior question to be asked. A method is a means to an end. What is the end in the present case? What aim does philosophy set before itself? What are the problems which a philosophical method must show us how to solve? It may be that philosophy has failed to find a satisfactory method because it has failed to define its aims satisfactorily, that the confusion and doubt about method betrays a confusion of purpose.

The question about the aim or aims of philosophy can itself be asked in two senses. It may be a normative question:

what are the aims which philosophers should set before themselves, now and for the future? Or it may be a question of historical fact: what aims have been pursued by those many people, from Thales to the present generation, who have commonly been known as 'philosophers'? I shall ask the question first of all in the historical sense. If it is to be answered later in the normative sense as well, that can best be done after the facts have been sorted out.

If the mass of philosophical writing which has come down to us is trustworthy evidence of the intentions of its authors, it seems that in fact there has been a diversity of aim, and that the one word 'philosophy' has been used to cover what were really different enterprises. One distinction in particular runs through the whole history of the subject, a distinction between two aims which philosophers have tried to combine, but which are in fact incompatible.

According to the classical tradition of European philosophy, the core of the subject lies in *metaphysics*. To this logic leads up, and from it ethical conclusions can be deduced. It is fashionable nowadays to make disapproving noises when metaphysics is mentioned; nevertheless the historical fact is as here stated. What then is or was the aim of metaphysics? This has itself been formulated in different ways, but the most satisfactory way seems to be to define metaphysics as the theory of being, or *ontology*; this means that it seeks to find propositions which can be truly asserted of everything which 'exists' in any sense of the word 'exist', and to distinguish the ultimate and irreducible classes into which the things which 'exist' can be divided. Without prejudice to the question, whether this can in fact be done, we can safely say that this is what metaphysics has traditionally tried to do. The conception of metaphysics as the theory of first causes or of ultimate principles, or the like, seems to depend on and be derivative from this. Again, it is often thought, by people who are not philosophers as well as by some who are, that there is a character of comprehensiveness about philosophy; that whereas other types of scholars are specialists working each in a limited field, the philosopher may be expected to show us how the work of the specialists coheres in one grand scheme of knowledge. If this is to be done by means of

detailed omniscience, the notion is of course absurd. But the theory of being as defined above might perhaps be seen as a framework holding the various sectional fields of inquiry together, since it would be dealing with features which are common to them all; and in that sense the popular idea of the philosopher as a man lifted above specialisms might have a certain limited justification.

But philosophers have also cherished the idea of making their subject into a *strenge Wissenschaft*, a strict science, with a definite method and assured results, exempt from doubt and scepticism. To this end they have engaged in logical and epistemological inquiries, seeking the ground of certainty and labouring to show that metaphysical knowledge, if only one seeks it in the right way, is clear and evident and not open to doubt. The task was an impossible one; yet it has been the belief of the 'great' philosophers of all ages that they could fulfil it, and their 'greatness' appears to some extent, paradoxically enough, in the very determination and skill with which they kept on at their hopeless enterprise. Lesser men, more easily discouraged but perhaps for that very reason more clear-sighted, have tended to lay their emphasis on one of the two aims at the expense of the other, some seeking clarity and precision in logical studies without attempting to explore the realms of being, and others making the exploration in a manner which approximates more closely to poetry than to science.

What is there, in fact, in philosophy which can claim to be strict science? Of course there is logic, especially the logic of deduction; no one will dispute its claim. But the same claim has been more dubiously made for other branches of philosophy too. Medieval ontology was believed by its practitioners to be such a science. Spinoza persuaded himself and some of his readers that his *Ethics* were logically watertight. The transcendental philosophy in Kant's own hands and in those of some later Kantians has made the same claim. None of these claims is justified. If philosophy is to be a strict science and nothing else, then it must be reduced to logic and logic only—a wide field, and offering great scope for progressive discovery, but yet much narrower than the field of philosophy as traditionally conceived. It may even

be questioned whether a discipline which consisted only of logic could properly be called 'philosophy' at all; for the *σοφία* from which philosophy gets its name is certainly something different from logical theory, even if this is widened to include the logic of induction and scientific and historical methodology.

If the history of the word and its popular acceptance to-day have any weight, the core of philosophy lies not in logic but in metaphysics, or in a combination of this with ethics. For the ordinary man expects philosophy to give him an idea of what the world is like, and where he belongs in it, and how he had better behave in view of all this. Metaphysics does, or appears to do, these things, and therefore it answers, as mere logic does not, to the conception of 'philosophy' as found both in literary tradition and in current popular belief. It gives people a sense of knowing where they are in the world, and it gives them a sense of function and even of duty, which can affect their aims and aspirations. It is philosophy in this sense of the word which has so often entered into close relationships with religion. But it is also this kind of philosophy which is now in grave difficulties. We are told that it cannot survive. What are we to say to this?

We need not take too seriously the drastic allegation that metaphysical utterances are meaningless. If anyone's theory of meaning is such as to condemn metaphysics wholesale and automatically, that fact should properly lead us to call in question his theory of meaning. So long as there are those who know how to work with utterances of this kind, the fact that others can do nothing with them merely shows that metaphysics is not every man's business, and perhaps also that certain types of training are liable to condition one against understanding it. 'But metaphysical utterances offend against common sense.' They are not supposed to be common-sense utterances. 'They do not conform to scientific standards of significance and clarity.' They are not scientific propositions either; you must learn to judge them as being what they are, not as failing to be what they are not meant to be. 'But just look at these sentences perpetrated by Professor X. Surely you cannot mean to defend this kind of

thing.' That has nothing to do with the question; individual metaphysicians, like other men, can be silly or incompetent. Specimens of their work may be amusing or infuriating, but they reflect discredit on their authors rather than on the subject itself.

'But it can be shown that the standing controversies in metaphysics arise from the misinterpretation of grammatical and syntactical forms, or from the illegitimate transformation of what are really logical conceptions into ontological ones.' This is a different accusation. If metaphysical utterances arise from a mistake, it does not follow that they are inherently meaningless; though of course we are all more likely to slip into talking nonsense if we are trying to uphold a theory which is built on a radical misconception. In my last lecture I accepted this diagnosis as correct up to a point; some traditional doctrines and problems of metaphysics do arise in this way from misuse or misinterpretation of words. But I also said that the diagnosis does not cover all the facts. There are controversies in metaphysics which do not arise from confusions about language, though confusions of language may be among their symptoms. Confusion of perspectives, i.e. of standpoints, is the deeper cause of the trouble.

The confusion is inveterate, and the resulting diversity of opinion constitutes in fact the most plausible argument in favour of the view that metaphysics is a hopeless enterprise which should be abandoned. In one sense, it is too easy to produce a theory of the nature of being or the structure of the universe. There are too many such theories, many of which can be defended quite plausibly, though none can be established decisively. It is precisely because metaphysical theories do mean something, and because the definitive establishment of one such theory as the true one would be an event of real importance, that the conflict of views in metaphysics is so exasperating, and the temptation to have done with the whole business is so strong.

If metaphysics is to be saved, we must find a way to break the deadlock between the rival standpoints; and we can hardly do that so long as we cling to the methods which have become only too familiar to us through the centuries.

It is certainly time to see whether a fresh approach may not open up unforeseen ways of advance; and we must be prepared to find that, even if advance is possible, it may not be in quite the direction which it has been customary to expect. But what fresh approach can we adopt?

We can begin, in conformity with a well-established modern tendency, by making metaphysics itself the object of our inquiry; by making a study not of the universe, but of theories of the universe. If we do this, we find that at least their diversity is not random and chaotic. There is a typology of metaphysical systems; a limited number of elementary types can be distinguished, which reappear over and over again in the history of philosophy, variously elaborated and variously modified by one another's influence, according to the historical circumstances of this age or that, but always recognizably the same under their changing dress. The idea of working out such a typology systematically is associated with the name of Dilthey, though he was not the only or even the earliest person to recognize the fact of recurring types in philosophy; after all, who can read the history of philosophy without being forced to see it? But Dilthey did more than recognize it, he proposed to make it the object of a systematic study, a *Weltanschauungslehre* or 'philosophy of philosophy'. His attempt has attracted notice, but has by no means always commanded approval.

There is good reason for this. Dilthey was not seriously seeking a fresh approach to the solution of the metaphysical problems. He thought he had despaired of the possibility of such a solution, and was merely asking what philosophers were to do instead. What he found for them to do was to study the past history of philosophy, discover in it the chief recurring types, and give a psychological explanation of these. His 'philosophy of philosophy' is, on the surface at least, not a philosophical inquiry at all, but historical, psychological, and sociological. He is telling us to give up being philosophers and become something else; advice which we have not felt disposed to accept. But let us ask ourselves whether his despair is really inevitable, and whether, if we do not share it, we can use his approach in a more creatively philosophical manner than he did himself.



I think we can, if we make two adjustments. First, we must work with a smaller and more precisely determinable unit than a *Weltanschauung*. Metaphysicians are not *always* trying to grasp the scheme of things entire. They spend a great deal of their time working at limited and comparatively prosaic problems, and yet even here the typical differences of standpoint and method make themselves felt. It is of standpoints, of all degrees of comprehensiveness, and not only of *Weltanschauungen*, that we must make our study. And second, it must not be only a descriptive and explanatory study, it must contrive somehow to become normative, it must find a criterion by which to pass judgement on standpoints and on their relative value: their truth-value, of course, wherever that may be found to reside, not merely their aesthetic appeal or even their psychological value as therapeutic myths.

Metaphysics may be regarded as a fantasia or a set of variations on the verb *to be* and on certain words connected with it. If we follow the classical tradition from Aristotle through scholasticism to Leibniz, its last great exponent before the rise of the critical philosophy, we shall find that its discussions centre upon three main themes. First, there is the relation between existence and essence, i.e. between 'being' in the existential sense and 'being' in the predicative sense. Then there is the relation between appearance and reality, i.e. between being and seeming. And lastly there is the analysis of process and causality, i.e. of coming to be and ceasing to be and of what constitutes a *raison d'être*. Classical ontology dealt with these issues dogmatically, offering itself as an account of how the world is constituted, and the result was never free from doubt and obscurity. But it can all be reinterpreted in terms of a discussion of standpoints. Ontological principles can be taken not as statements of what the world is certainly like, but as statements of ways in which we do, or could, regard the world. Theories of causality can be taken as statements of what we regard as a satisfactory type of explanation. Even speculative arguments can be taken not as showing that such and such is in fact the case, but as showing that, if we choose to regard the world in the light of certain principles, we shall have to admit certain

consequences of these principles. A metaphysic so transmuted is what Collingwood has in mind when he tells us that metaphysics is by rights a science of absolute presuppositions; and he is right in maintaining that this is not a radical departure from the metaphysical tradition, but a legitimate development of it.

We can further transpose it, if we wish, into the key of language-analysis. In that case all metaphysical principles will be presented as verbal conventions, as statements of how we use, or how one could possibly use, words like 'be', 'become', 'appear', 'real', 'reason', 'cause', &c.; and all metaphysical arguments will take the form of showing that some uses of these words are or are not consistent with other uses of them. This is merely a different version of the procedure which I have already described, using a different jargon, but involving no alteration of substance. For, as was said in the last lecture, language is closely linked with vision, and to adopt a particular linguistic usage is in effect to adopt a particular set of principles, or standpoint. The analysis of verbal conventions, therefore, is still metaphysics, however much its present-day practitioners may shy at the word; it is metaphysics in its proper modern form as standpoint-analysis—a natural and legitimate development from that tradition which they suppose themselves to have shaken off.

And further, it will continue to be a controversial subject. 'Analysis' is no safeguard against that; for we shall not all agree about the results of the analysis, or even about the method of carrying it out. There is a type of thinker who begins with the conviction that one way of looking at things, and only one, is right and legitimate in science or philosophy. Such a man will find a linguistic code which satisfies his requirements and expresses the kind of things which he wants to say; and his 'analysis' will then consist in breaking down all utterances made in a different convention from his own, either 'translating' them into what he considers to be their equivalents in his own language, or, if he cannot translate them, declaring them to be 'nonsense'. This man is a dogmatist, whatever he may profess to be; even if he calls himself an 'empiricist' and talks a lot about 'verification' he is a dogmatist none the less for that. And there is also the



more modest type of philosopher, who is ready to think and let think, who knows what his own standpoint is and labours to think consistently within it, but is also eager to enter into other standpoints as an enrichment of and a check upon his own. His 'analysis' will be an attempt to explore the ways in which people talk, in the hope of finding there a clue to the ways in which they interpret experience. It will be an effort not primarily of criticism, but of understanding, which will then lead inevitably to comparison, and so finally to judgement. It is in this type of philosophy especially that I see the true heir of the metaphysical tradition.

In the remainder of this lecture I shall attempt to describe three of the characteristics which philosophy pursued in this spirit may be expected to possess. (1) It will be devoted to the understanding of standpoints. (2) It will be a comparative, and in a certain sense a dramatic, study. (3) It will be dialectical. In the following lecture two further characteristics will emerge. (4) Philosophy is a normative study, passing judgement on the merits of rival standpoints. (5) The judgement is an 'existential' one.

1. To be a dogmatist is comparatively simple. It requires, above all, logical acumen, i.e. the power to see relations between propositions and sets of propositions, together with pertinacity and a certain ruthlessness in pushing one's principles to their ultimate consequences. Spinoza is an example of this type of mind both in its strength and in its weakness. By contrast with it, the pursuit of understanding is complex, subtle, and difficult, and for everyone there is a point beyond which he cannot go in it. One learns to detect, in others and in oneself, the symptoms of having reached this limit. But some people have much narrower limits than others, and some are not concerned, as others are, to extend their limits as widely as they can. Philosophy, I believe, is not fully itself, is not fully a pursuit of *σοφία*, where this is not done.

Understanding is not a substitute for logical acumen; it presupposes it, but goes beyond it. For it is not a study of mere words, nor of sentences or of propositions, but of standpoints or ways of regarding things, as these find expression in verbal discourse. A standpoint was defined in the previous lecture as a set of presuppositions, together with

the type of question to which they give rise and the way of looking at things which results from them; and we added that it finds expression in characteristic words and uses of words. All these factors are organically related, and to grasp the standpoint we must see them in their relations. A word, taken by itself, has a meaning or a number of meanings which can be learned from a dictionary. A sentence, taken in isolation, either has a definite grammatical meaning or it has not; if it has, this meaning also can be ascertained by methods which are well known. Between sentences whose grammatical meanings are definitely known, it is possible to establish logical relations and to set up a calculus of such relations. That is the business of formal logic. The skill for which it calls is essentially a mechanical skill—not the less valuable on that account. But sentences in real life do not occur thus isolated; they have a logical and also a rhetorical context, they refer back to previous utterances and point forward to others which may follow, they answer one another and balance one another in ways which cannot be described by the categories of formal logic. Yet it is here, in the order in which a speaker chooses to make his points, in the relative prominence which he assigns to this or that part of his discourse, that something becomes manifest which is of the essence of his standpoint—the balance of his interests, the noetic as distinct from the purely logical order in which his thoughts are linked together. To understand this means doing something which formal logic does not attempt, and which (be it admitted at once) cannot be done with the precision and certainty which we expect from formal logic. We are moving here in a region more adjacent to literary and historical understanding. By virtue of this, philosophy takes its place among the humanities. And, because philosophy pursued in this vein is a study of standpoints and outlooks, the history of philosophy too is not merely a story of changes in method and logical technique, but a record of changing standpoints and ways of regarding life.

2. The understanding of standpoints is not, however, the end of our task. It is more nearly the beginning. Standpoints are numerous and widely various, and they must be distinguished and compared with one another. They stand to

one another in various relations of agreement and conflict, and these relations must be explored. In this way philosophy acquires a certain dramatic quality, which shows itself both in the course of its historical development, and in the way in which actual philosophical discussions are conducted. Here is the explanation and justification of the practice, which grew up in the nineteenth century, of teaching philosophy through the history of philosophy. The history of philosophy can be presented as a continuing argument, into which each fresh generation strikes as it comes upon the scene, and into which we and our students can strike more appositely if we know what has been said already. Our own philosophical thinking too may often take the form of a debate between different standpoints within our own minds. Here is the source of some features of Hegel's writing which will make him for ever unintelligible to the mere logician as well as to every one-track mind. Possessed of the power of entering into different and even conflicting standpoints and appreciating them from within, he strove to experience them in all their variety and to become himself the theatre of their debate. This dramatic aspect of philosophical thinking finds literary expression in the use of dialogue form by some philosophical writers, and in the practice of organizing symposia.

3. Philosophy, however, is not animated by a merely historical or dramatic interest. It is out to solve problems. Historical conflicts do sometimes end in a reconciliation in which justice is done to both sides; but often too they end in the suppression of one side by the other, or in the exhaustion of both and the abandonment of their contention. Dramatic conflicts usually end in a reconciliation of some kind, but it is often a merely ingenious one, a *coup de théâtre*, rather than a true solution of the problem. Philosophy insists on having real solutions and reasoned solutions; it is not merely dramatic, but dialectical.

The word 'dialectic' in its broadest sense means a certain way of arguing which has always been characteristic of metaphysics. A proposition is put forward for consideration, and at first we do not know what to think of it. So we examine it in various ways, from various points of view, in order to

find what different interpretations of it are possible, and what other propositions are compatible or incompatible with it in each interpretation. As a result, we may find that it reduces to a tautology; or that it can be given a form in which experience will determine for us its truth-value; or (as often happens) that it is neither a tautology nor an empirical proposition, but a definition or application of an absolute principle. If it is this last, it faces us with the challenge to define our attitude to the principle in question and the standpoint based on it.

Such is 'dialectic' in the broadest sense of the word. In this sense it has much in common with what is today called 'analysis'. But there is a special type of dialectic which has received special attention and emphasis in some quarters since Kant's time. In this type we have not one proposition put forward for consideration, but two propositions, for each of which a *prima facie* case can be made out, but which as now stated are mutually incompatible. The aim of the dialectic here is to see whether, by redefining the terms, or taking the propositions in a different context and from a different standpoint, we can extract what is really significant and valuable in both and find that they make sense together. To do this is to find a 'synthesis' of the two propositions. This is quite often the way in which our philosophical thinking moves; we must all have experienced it at some time or other. But certain philosophers of the post-Kantian group tried to make of it a regular method and a literary form, which often became artificial.

'Dialectic' in this sense has sometimes been misconceived, as if the dialectical process were supposed to be a peculiar kind of entailment, unknown to formal logic, by which vast speculative conclusions could be established. This impression, partly based on Plato, has been greatly fostered by Hegel, whose language and procedure, especially in the *Logic*, are not sufficiently safeguarded against misinterpretations of this kind. The *Logic* does often read as if it were a kind of transformation scene, where one concept 'turns into' another of its own accord while we look on; or perhaps a process of logical demonstration, where the acceptance of one simple concept mysteriously compels us to go beyond

it into wider and wider syntheses. Yet even the text of the *Logic* contains passages which show that Hegel knew what he was really doing. His dialectic, here and in all his other philosophical works except the *Naturphilosophie*, is a dialectic of standpoints. The 'concepts' with which he works, even in the *Logic*, are really ways of construing experience, and this is much more obvious in works like the *Philosophie des Geistes* or the *Phänomenologie*. He is exhibiting the debate between the standpoints on a grand scale, and moving towards its solution by the methods which he considers appropriate and effective. One need not share his faith in those methods in order to appreciate the underlying conception.

Hegel is a better philosopher than his detractors suppose. He understands that metaphysics should be a critique of standpoints, and that the ontological question, 'what is the real nature of the universe?', must be translated into the critical question, 'what is the standpoint which makes most sense of experience?' He sees that to answer this question requires a sustained effort of understanding and comparison, and that the process is one which can easily be expressed in dialectical form. Of course his understanding is neither perfect nor all-inclusive; no man's is. For that reason, too, we may not agree that the sense he ultimately makes of experience is the best sense that can be made of it. But the heaviest charge against him is that of a double blindness. He thinks that all metaphysical disputes can end in a reconciliation, that we never have to make up our mind between two incompatible principles, that there is always a way of keeping the essence of both in some higher synthesis. And he falls into this over-easy optimism because he assumes that metaphysical disputes are purely intellectual disagreements, which therefore can be resolved if only we think long enough and intelligently enough. I believe, on the contrary, that there are disputes in philosophy which we only misrepresent if we pretend to reconcile them; and that their irreconcilability is due to the fact that at their heart lies no mere intellectual disagreement, but a conflict of wills.

We must distinguish between three sorts of questions which can arise in metaphysics.

First, there are the pseudo-questions, which are created and maintained by reflection upon and misinterpretation of linguistic forms. One of the best known of these is the problem of universals, which has been a nuisance to metaphysics and a source of discredit to it for so long. This problem could not have arisen if it had not been for our habit of employing common nouns, adjectives, and abstract terms, and of using words like 'same' or 'identical' in a qualitative as well as in a numerical sense. The conception of universals as a distinct item in the furniture of the world was an attempt to explain the use of these words, and the only way to exorcise it and all the difficulties which it brings with it is to find a simpler explanation of the linguistic facts. In a similar way, some aspects of the 'problem' of 'free will' seem to arise from mistaken interpretations of words which we use in speaking of resolution and action.

A second class of questions are those which involve a genuine conflict of views, but a conflict which can be resolved. Examples of this type may be found among the questions relating to 'appearance and reality'. This is not one problem, but a whole nest of problems, linked together by little more than the fact that they all have to do with one or other of the senses in which we speak of 'being' or 'not being', or make use of the word 'real' or 'really'. What has happened here is not that a grammatical form has been illegitimately transformed into an ontological theory, but that sentences which are true and appropriate in one context have been illegitimately treated as true and appropriate in a quite different context. Problems which arise from confusion of this kind are solved as soon as the neglected distinctions are restored.

A distinction between 'being' and 'seeming', or 'appearing', is well known in common speech. A thing can 'appear to be' other than it 'really is'; e.g. a man may 'appear' to be drunk when he is 'really' suffering from some nervous disorder. When a man 'appears to be' drunk, we can equally well say that he 'is apparently' drunk. In this example the divergence between 'appearance' and 'reality' extends only to one attribute of the object in question. In other instances it can extend farther, involving the essential nature of the

object or even its very existence. Thus a thing may 'appear' to be a rabbit when it is 'really' a squirrel; and the famous pink rats of the drunkard 'appear' to him to exist when 'in fact', or 'in reality', they do not exist.

We are all familiar with this distinction, and know how to apply it in ordinary experience. Common sense feels no need to ask any questions about it. Philosophers may wish to subject it to analysis, to seek equivalents for it in some other language better adapted to their philosophical purposes. Such analysis will no doubt call for care and patience, but there is no reason to expect that it will, of itself, give rise to any difficulty or paradox. And yet in fact difficulties and paradoxes have arisen from various things which philosophers have said about appearance and reality, about what is meant by 'really existing' and what are the things which do really exist. Philosophers have used their terms in different and conflicting senses; and they have also come into collision with common sense.

One source of difficulty lies in the work of Berkeley, whose analysis of propositions about the existence of physical things is the common starting-point of phenomenalism and idealism. He showed us how propositions about physical things and processes can be translated into propositions about the making of observations: how the proposition that something exists or has existed can be translated into the proposition that something is observed, or has been observed, or would have been observed if someone had fulfilled certain conditions. This discovery is a valuable one for certain limited purposes within philosophy. Unfortunately, it has often been expressed as if it were the only *true* analysis, as if by its discovery common sense and science were convicted of serious error. Such is phenomenalism when, from a useful tool of epistemology, it is transformed into a doctrine of the nature of the physical world; and it needs only a small measure of speculative daring to change this into idealism of one kind or another.

Neither idealism nor phenomenalism has often a friendly reception from the plain man. He usually interprets it as meaning that physical things 'are not really there', and it is often extraordinarily hard to convince him that that is not

what is meant. Marxists, too, regard 'idealism' (of which they consider phenomenalism to be a variety) as betraying a deficient sense of the objectivity and independence of the physical world; their belief that this is so has something of the character of an act of faith, and is, like an act of faith, impervious to refutation. But, though we cannot hope to convince the plain man or the Marxist of the wrongness of his understanding, we may obtain some profit for ourselves by trying to diagnose their error.

It arises from a confusion between two standpoints.

(a) There is what I shall call the ontological standpoint, characteristic alike of common sense, of science, and of most European philosophies before the end of the eighteenth century. This standpoint takes for granted, as its primary 'reality', a world of objects extended in space and enduring through time. The human observer is situated in this world and is himself a part of it. He depends upon it, and it does not in any way depend on him either for its existence or for its essential characteristics. Thinking is not 'construction', but exploration of the world, and knowledge is apprehension of an independent object. Within this realist framework it is of course necessary to make some provision for perceptual and other types of error. The plain man does this without any sense of difficulty; the distinction between being and appearing, as set forth in the last paragraph but four, operates within the realist universe of common sense belief. It is only those who try to combine common-sense realism with philosophical sophistication, like some 'realists' of the early twentieth century, who find themselves in difficulties over it. The scientist, in view of his doctrine of the structure of matter, cannot be so untroubled as the plain man; he has to allow for the subjectivity of all sensible qualities; but, so long as he is being a scientist and not playing at philosophy, he too is realist in his view of the entities and processes which are the object of his researches. It is characteristic of the ontological standpoint in all its forms that, in it, no attempt is made to define 'existence'; it is assumed that it is an ultimate, and that we all know well enough what it is.

(b) But there is also what I shall call the transcendental standpoint, characteristic of a great deal of philosophy since

the eighteenth century. The essence of this is that one talks not about 'the world' but about 'experience'. The primary thing here is not space-time, but the field of consciousness, and the occupants of that field are not thought of primarily as existing objects, but as known or knowable objects. The questions which arise are not about the way in which one state of things comes about through causal dependence on another, but about the way in which objects and groups of objects are built up as logical constructions on the basis of sensory experience. These are epistemological, not ontological questions. As for the knowing subject, in so far as he is one of the objects of his own knowledge; he is a logical construction like the rest; but in so far as he is what does the constructing, his position is hard to define. One must either be silent, with Wittgenstein, or learn the age-old language of negation which he would not learn.<sup>1</sup> It is from this standpoint that the phenomenalist analysis is made; the phenomenalist account of an object is an account of an object in so far forth as *cognitum*, given in epistemological language in answer to an epistemological question. It is not an account of an object in so far forth as existing *in rerum natura*, given in object-language in answer to an ontological question. The reason why the plain man and the Marxist are indignant about it is that they do not make this distinction. They take the epistemological statement, which may be true, as an ontological statement, in which capacity it must be false. And the reason why they do this is that they have never learned to enter into the transcendental standpoint, and are therefore compelled to misinterpret whatever is said from that standpoint.

It must not, however, be supposed that the making of the distinction, and the recognition of the two standpoints as being what they are, is the end of all our difficulties. If it is the end of one, it brings others with it. I call in evidence the history of philosophy since Kant, and especially in the immediate post-Kantian period. Kant himself had presented the transcendental standpoint in a clear and compelling fashion; it was his great philosophical achievement; but he never saw

<sup>1</sup> 'That Self is to be described by No, no.' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, iv. 5, 15).

clearly how the ontological standpoint could be combined with it. When from his theory of knowledge, so neatly and consistently worked out in phenomenalist terms, he passes on to bring in the shadowy thing in itself, the friendliest of readers must feel that this is a *μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος*. His successors one and all rejected the thing in itself, and they did well; but that meant that they had to face afresh for themselves the question, how justice can be done to the ontological standpoint in a philosophy whose growing-points lie on the transcendental side.

Fichte and Schelling were fully conscious that this was their problem, and a great part of the interest of their early writings lies in the attempts which they made to state it and to move towards a solution. Their thinking is dominated by a constant antithesis, which may appear at first sight to be the ontological antithesis between mind, or consciousness, and nature. Closer examination shows that it is really the dialectical antithesis between a philosophy which sets out to present a theory of the universe of existents and a philosophy which conceives its business to be to analyse the field of consciousness. In Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1801 the two standpoints are repeatedly characterized and set in contrast. He calls them respectively 'realism' and 'idealism', and says that the task of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is to rise above them both to a standpoint which does justice to each. In Schelling's early writings the contrast appears as that between 'transcendental philosophy' and 'philosophy of nature', and the ill-starred 'philosophy of identity' was his attempt to find a synthesis of the two. No doubt Fichte and Schelling both failed to find a clear and convincing synthesis; and Hegel, intent upon problems of his own, shows less awareness of this particular problem than the predecessors whom he eclipsed. In general no idealist solution has been able to command recognition as an adequate one; but the more recent reaction against idealism has led to an obscuration of the problem itself. An agreed correlation of the transcendental and ontological standpoints has yet to be found.

Even now we are not at the end of our difficulties. In Hegel, who is an idealist, we find the contrasting terms 'appearance' and 'reality' used in a way which has nothing

to do with idealism; further, we find the word 'idealism' itself used in a sense which has nothing to do with the transcendental standpoint and the phenomenalist analysis. Here we are dealing with a conception which is familiar to us in Spinoza, that steady champion of the ontological standpoint, and in the scholastics: the conception in which *realitas* = *perfectio*, and in which therefore there is *in rerum natura* a scale of degrees of reality. I mention this doctrine not in order to discuss it, but merely to indicate how different it is from those which I have just been discussing. Yet it and they have been confused, and the source of the confusion lies in the varying uses of words. Common sense knows a distinction between the 'real' and the 'apparent' or the 'illusory'. Phenomenalist and idealist analysis present us with a picture of the world as 'phenomenal' in a sense which the plain man supposes to mean 'merely apparent'. And at the same time a metaphysical tradition, far older in Europe than phenomenism or idealism, tells of a sense in which God alone is fully 'real', and all finite beings are infected with 'not-being' or 'unreality'; they are sometimes described as 'shadows' of that fuller Reality from which they originate. This standpoint too is no part of common sense, though the plain man has often heard expressions of it from religious sources. Let us denote the common-sense notion of 'real' and 'apparent' by the symbol  $\alpha$ , the phenomenalist-idealist notion of the 'phenomenality' of the world by  $\beta$ , and the doctrine of degrees of 'reality' by  $\gamma$ . Then we may say that  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  are each, by virtue of the terms they use, in constant danger of being misinterpreted by assimilation to  $\alpha$ ; that there is nothing to prevent  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  being held simultaneously by the same philosopher, as they are by Hegel and his followers; and that then a further confusion can arise if the language used to express  $\beta$  and the language used to express  $\gamma$  are not kept carefully apart.

This is a tangle of problems, but a tangle which can be sorted out. If the conflicting views are clearly distinguished, they cease to conflict. What is hopeless confusion while we think we are dealing with a single standpoint becomes clear and manageable when we realize that we are dealing with three. But this is not always the outcome of analysis. There

are also genuine conflicts of views, which cannot be brought to a reconciliation, and where analysis, by bringing clarity, does not also bring agreement, but rather sharpens the disagreement. A crowning example of this kind of conflict is the problem, or rather family of problems, summed up in the question of the truth of Christianity.

Let us consider Christian theism as it has been known in medieval and modern Europe, not merely as a philosophical proposition, but as a living faith; and let us seek its expression in the best-informed theology of medieval and modern times. If we do this, we shall find in it a combination of two standpoints, each of which is strange to common sense. One of these is the standpoint referred to as  $\gamma$  in the last paragraph but one. This is a philosophical as well as a religious standpoint, and though there is foundation for it in the Christian Scriptures, the elaboration of it by Christian thinkers has owed a great deal to Neo-Platonic influences. Nevertheless it is truly at home in Christianity, and is the point at which the *ἀπλῶς φιλόσοφος* can most easily get a grip upon Christian doctrine. The other standpoint is a distinctively religious one, though not peculiar to Christianity among religions. Its essence is that one sees the world not primarily as nature, but as history, and that one sees in every historical event or process the action of the living God. This means that every situation in which a human being finds himself contains a 'word' of God to him, a lesson to learn, a duty to do, and every action man performs carries with it God's 'judgement' upon the agent. The whole of life is a perpetual confrontation of man by God, who 'has beset him behind and before, and laid his hand upon him'. The specifically religious aspect of life consists in the way in which man comports himself in this confrontation, and there is no moment of life from which this aspect is absent. It is in these terms that the most characteristic and central beliefs of Christianity are stated, and it is in this context that the most characteristic and central Christian observances are to be understood.

Great difficulties arise when we translate this standpoint into metaphysical terms. To express correctly the status of the finite human spirit, to give man his position as a real

person and a responsible agent, while also giving God his proper place as the only Creator and Mover of all, to reconcile human freedom with divine omnipotence and divine providence—these are among the occupational distresses of the Christian theologian, and they arise from what is distinctively Christian in his thought. Yet a difficulty is not an impossibility, and for my part I do not believe that the internal difficulties of the Christian standpoint are insoluble. They are due to confusion of perspectives, to persistent forgetfulness of relevant factors, to the use of words with a common-sense connotation in a context which is not of common sense. They will yield, I believe, to the kind of analysis of which an example has just been given.

But (and this is the point I wish to make here) these difficulties are not the whole, nor perhaps the chief part, of the case against Christianity. That case rests, for very many people, on quite other grounds than these. It rests on an incompatibility which exists or is thought to exist between Christianity and some other view which a man holds and is not prepared to abandon. And there really are such incompatibilities. It is just not true that, given sufficient ingenuity, all standpoints can be brought into harmony. There are real and fundamental conflicts, conflicts which no amount of dialectical or analytical manipulation can resolve, but which stand out ever more sharp and clear as we inquire into them. And because this is so, the acceptance of some standpoints brings with it automatically the rejection of others. The question for or against Christianity is not just a question of Christianity alone, but of Christianity in competition with something else; and there are standpoints the acceptance of which is incompatible with the acceptance of Christianity.

Incompatibility of basic standpoints is a problem which philosophy has been slow to recognize for what it is. Philosophers have clung to the tacit assumption that all conflicts of view are conflicts of opinion on points of detail between people who share the same fundamental principles. For such differences there is hope of adjustment by frank discussion; indeed, if an adjustment is not reached, we may conclude that either the discussion has not been pursued far enough, or it has not been conducted with complete candour.

Old-style metaphysics took for granted that all differences are of this kind, and the change to the transcendental philosophy did not exorcise this assumption. Nay, even the further transition to analysis has not exorcised it; for there is still a kind of philosopher who thinks that his own linguistic convention, tailored to fit his own standpoint, is the one upon which all sensible people must ultimately converge. It is not by way of analysis as such, but by another road, that we come to a true recognition of our situation, of the variety of standpoints or absolute presuppositions, and the threat of intellectual nihilism which is implicit in this.

Collingwood, who saw the variety of standpoints, sometimes writes as if he despaired of finding a way of intelligibly discussing their merits. So too, in a different way, does Dilthey. Both men give the impression of thinking that people just have their respective standpoints, as a result of psychological or historical conditioning, and that, beyond recognizing their diversity, there is nothing that we can do about it. I have argued elsewhere that Collingwood and Dilthey are not in fact as relativistic as they seem. However that may be, for us the question is a living one: do we merely *have* our standpoints, and (if we are philosophers) become factually aware of what they are, or do we or can we also *pass judgement* on them? And, if we do or can pass judgement, by what criterion can fundamental standpoints and absolute presuppositions be judged? The answer which we give to this question will be of decisive importance for philosophy, and for the relation between philosophy and Christianity.



### III

#### BELIEF AS RESPONSIBLE ACT

THERE is a passage in H. G. Wells's story *The Time Machine* where the Time Traveller is explaining his invention to a group of friends after dinner. There is a psychologist present, a medical man, a provincial mayor, a 'very young man', and one Filby, 'an argumentative person with red hair', who represents pugnacious common sense. It is he who utters the first protest when the idea is put forward that it may be possible to travel into the past or future.

"It's against reason," said Filby.

"What reason?" said the Time Traveller.

"You can show black is white by argument," said Filby, "but you will never convince me."

What, in this passage, does Filby mean by 'reason'? Apparently some kind of principle or conviction which is impervious to reasoning. This is paradoxical; and yet Filby's remark seems, as we read it, to be natural and in character. Evidently he is using the word in some way which we understand, though we might not use it quite in that way ourselves.

The word 'reason', used thus abstractly without an article, is apt nowadays to have an emotional flavour. It was not always so. *Ratio* in scholastic Latin is a matter-of-fact sort of word; it is the recognized name for one of that group of functions which together constitute 'thinking'. It, and its equivalents in the modern languages, retained this sense in philosophical usage until the end of the eighteenth century, when Kant's analysis began to accustom us to a different picture of the cognitive functions. In common present-day usage, however, the word 'reason' is hardly ever without a valuational character, sometimes expressing approval and sometimes disapproval. It is a pejorative word in the language of some types of religious people, who contrast it to its disadvantage with 'faith', and in the language of some romantics, who contrast it with 'feeling' or 'intuition'. It expresses approval in the language of more intellectual types, especially those who are the heirs of classical humanism.

The word 'reasonable' is always a good word, and 'rational' very frequently so. 'Rationalization' was a good word in the 1930's, when it meant reorganizing industry with a view to greater efficiency; it is a bad word in its psychological application, where it is taken to mean or at least to imply self-deception. 'Rationalism' is a word with so many meanings that it is hard to generalize about it. On the whole we may perhaps say that 'reason' today no longer means a specific cognitive function, clearly distinguishable from other cognitive functions; it means rather a type of mental behaviour, a way of conducting one's intellectual affairs, and different people apply it to different types of intellectual behaviour, but always with a note of approval or disapproval as the case may be. Filby, I suppose, in the passage quoted above, meant by it an obstinate adherence to common-sense views of the structure of the universe, as against the readiness of the Time Traveller to follow an argument wherever it might lead.

If we all approved and disapproved of the same things, this use of 'reason' as a value-word would cause no difficulty. But this is far from being the case. Men differ widely in their notions of the part that thought should play in life, and of what kind of activity thinking itself should be. We have different truth-paradigms, i.e. different models of understanding, explanation, and criticism to which we are attached. This too is a difference between medieval and modern times. In the medieval world there was, on the whole, an agreed conception of what constituted knowledge or truth, and of the way to go about seeking it. Such disagreements as there were (and of course there were plenty) fell within an overarching unity. There was a common paradigm of intellectual life and a common language in which to talk of it. Today this unity has been lost. The separation of natural science from philosophy, and the development of historical studies in independence of both, the rise of differences of method and outlook within each of these provinces, especially within philosophy itself, and finally the progressive estrangement of all these disciplines from theology—all this has led to a shifting of the landmarks and a complete alteration in the intellectual scene. There is a far greater diversity of aims



and methods among those engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, and a greater diversity also in their notions of what the total body of truth is, to which their own researches are a particular contribution.

Diversity of aims need not, of itself, lead to conflict. What is diverse need not be incompatible. Though it is of course harder today to see the systematic unity of all knowledge than it once was, it need not follow from this that the unity is no longer there or that we can no longer see it at all. It need not follow, but in fact it has followed. We are no longer in agreement as to what the aim of intellectual inquiry is, and what the total body of truth may be expected to be like. The positivist, for example, does not recognize that what the theologian is concerned with is knowledge at all. Note that I say 'the positivist', not 'the scientist'. For it may be that in fact theology is a genuine kind of knowledge, and that it and scientific knowledge go perfectly well together when one understands how to relate them. Most theologians and some scientists think this is the case. But the positivist is one (whether himself a scientist or not) who thinks otherwise; and *the belief* that scientific knowledge is the only kind of knowledge there is can obviously not be reconciled with *the belief* that theology is a legitimate intellectual pursuit. The two beliefs dictate mutually incompatible courses of intellectual conduct, inspired by mutually incompatible aims.

Differences of aim mean differences of *will*, and, from the moment that we recognize the existence of such differences, a volitional element enters into the theory of knowledge. This should occasion no surprise. Thinking is not an automatic and involuntary process like breathing; at least systematic and organized thinking, like science or history or philosophy or theology, is not so. There is a will to think, and there is a will to think in certain ways. The Germans speak of a *Kunstwille*, a will to art, which is present in every human community, but is not alike in them all. The *Kunstwille* of classical Greece was different from the *Kunstwille* of western Europe in the Gothic period. Similarly we may say that there is a 'will to think'. A culture is defined, and distinguished from other cultures, in part by the ways in which its people will to think. The will of our own culture is in

this respect a divided will. Perhaps at no time since the age of Descartes has it been true to say that educated Europe had a common will in intellectual matters. Some of us doubt, and some deny, the value of aims which others pursue with their whole energies. Some are blind, and some deliberately shut their eyes, to what others single out as especially worthy of attention.

Differences of aim and conduct mean differences of will; and will means pursuit and avoidance, desire and aversion, love, hate, and fear. These, and others like them, are *attitudes* which a man takes up towards his surroundings and towards himself. And it is these attitudes which, in the last analysis, determine the course of his thinking; for it is they which determine what he is interested in, and what kind of interest he takes in it, the questions which he wishes to ask about it, and the assumptions which he is prepared to make in order to obtain answers to these questions. His standpoint, in short, derives directly from his attitude to experience, and differences of standpoint depend upon and reflect differences in the underlying attitudes.

It is important that we should understand the full meaning of this.

Up to a point we can easily understand and accept it. We all know how, in particular cases, a man's thinking is influenced by his feelings about things and people, by personal likes and dislikes, by private associations valid only for himself, or by party spirit or loyalty to a group. We know the symptoms of these things: exaggerated enthusiasms or antipathies, resistances to certain ideas and questions, and a tendency to use certain words with a peculiar emotional emphasis. Where the same factors operate simultaneously upon a large number of people, we get the formation of coteries or sects; and here too we find similar linguistic and psychological symptoms, the distinctive jargon and the tabco on certain ideas and standpoints. All this, when we see it in other people, we sum up as 'prejudice', and the existence of prejudices and the way they work is familiar to us. But prejudice as such is not a matter of philosophical interest; for, simply as such, it raises no logical or epistemological questions.

A prejudiced man is not necessarily one whose fundamental principles and world-scheme differ from our own. Many of the examples of individual or group prejudice which we meet in life relate only to particular things or people. A man who thinks as we do about things in general is found to diverge widely from our judgement on a particular matter, and we think we can see the cause of this divergence, and that it is an irrational one. Therefore it is possible to argue against the prejudiced man. It is not, of course, usually possible to argue effectively, because his prejudice has precisely the effect of immunizing him against argument; but it is possible to argue to the point, because there is something in his general view of things which, if he followed it out consistently, would compel him to change his view on the particular matter in question. His difference from us does not involve the first principles and foundations of belief; and therefore it raises no philosophical questions, but only psychological ones.

There are, however, differences of a deeper kind than this, differences which concern not our attitude to particular things or persons, but our attitude to life as a whole. A man's affective and volitional life may be regarded as a structure in many layers. At the surface are the things which he feels or does in the passing moment, the sudden emotion on hearing of someone's illness, or the smoking of a cigarette because someone in the course of conversation has offered him one—things which happen easily and automatically, without engaging his personality at a deep level and without leaving behind any important trace. Then there are the things which he does of set choice, and these may be of greater or lesser importance to him. Some things he chooses only as means to other things. To some he is attached for their own sake; and of these, again, some will mean more to him and have a stronger hold on his affections and his will than others. Even on the deepest level we can further distinguish between the particular objects or pursuits to which he is attached and the needs or desires which find satisfaction in these objects or pursuits. These fundamental needs or desires are the basis on which his whole life-structure rests. I shall call them his *basic attitudes*. It is they which determine the

direction of his interests, the experiences and activities which he finds good, and the tasks which he will spend himself to perform. They determine, in short, the structure of his mind and personality; and, as part of that, they shape his manner of thinking, his standpoints, his axioms and principles.

'This is more psychology.' Yes, but this time it is a piece of psychology which has a direct philosophical interest. It is psychology on the point of passing into transcendental philosophy. For these basic attitudes of which I speak have the power of opening up or closing whole worlds of experience. What Kant said about *a priori* principles, and Collingwood about absolute presuppositions, may be said equally about these basic attitudes which underlie the principles and the presuppositions. If the presuppositions are made, they open up possibilities of interrogating and interpreting experience along specific lines, and in this way a branch of knowledge may be created or extended. If the presuppositions are not made, the questions are not asked, the answers are not found, the knowledge is not acquired, and our world is so far the poorer. But what decides whether we make a presupposition or withhold our acceptance from it? Our basic attitude, our interest or lack of interest in the kind of thing which that presupposition would enable us to explore, and, deeper still than this, the hopes, fears, and desires which together constitute our basic attitude to life. It is these, therefore, which in the end determine where we look, and how we look, and whether we find what is there to be found.

Two conditions must be fulfilled, in fact, if anything is to come to be known. The thing must be there to be found; and there must be someone to find it and interpret it. For those whose interest is in the formal side of logic it is easy to forget the observer and interpreter. The observation itself, i.e. the fact of sensory experience, and the superstructure of logical symbols which comes to be erected upon it, can be studied in an interesting and profitable way in abstraction from the subject who has the experience and makes the constructions. Yet the subject is there, i.e. we ourselves are there, active though unobtrusive, and if we were not thus active, observing and interpreting, nothing would exist at

all for us. Note that this statement is made from the transcendental standpoint, not from the ontological. From the ontological standpoint it is evident that if a thing *exists*, it exists whether I notice it or not. But from the transcendental standpoint it is equally evident that nothing at all can *exist for me* unless I do notice it. There may be various reasons for my failure to notice something. The facts of experience which are the evidence for it may not have come my way. Or they may have come my way, and I may have been somehow inhibited from attending to them and interpreting them aright. Ignorance and lack of training can have this inhibiting effect. So can hypnosis, or suggestion, or propaganda; the current views and attitudes of those among whom one moves, or the steady impersonal influence of use and wont. Or it may be my own internal condition; a neurosis, or a deep-seated fear of something, or some other basic attitude which can create in my mind an impenetrable iron curtain against certain types of consideration. On the other hand, my readiness to notice certain things and to interpret them in certain ways may itself be accounted for by desires or fears or similar attitudes. *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor*. Here a whole world of thought and feeling is referred to a basic attitude which is alleged to underlie it. Modern theories would often refer to a different attitude from Lucretius; religious belief is supposed rather to be a wish-fulfilment, a compensatory fantasy, the satisfaction of a need for companionship—another basic attitude. On the religious side it is not uncommon to hear unbelief accounted for by some reference to 'pride', whether the pride of intellect in the individual unbeliever or the collective pride of mankind in its growing power. Both sides agree that it is relevant to transport their controversy on to this plane, and find beneath their inconclusive intellectual disputes a deeper-lying conflict of basic attitudes. They are right on that point, whether their diagnosis of one another's basic attitudes is correct or not. Note again that this statement is made from the transcendental standpoint, and that it concerns the manner in which religious belief and unbelief respectively are made possible. In itself it does not judge the relative values of these conflicting attitudes and views, still less does it pronounce

on the ontological question of the existence of God. God may exist or he may not; that is an ontological question. But the question, whether the question of God's existence is for me a significant question at all, and what there is in me that makes it so, is a transcendental question, to be answered in the long run by a reference to my basic attitudes.

Dilthey in his *Weltanschauungslehre* describes three perpetually recurrent types of philosophy, each of which embodies a characteristic standpoint. Behind each standpoint he points to a basic attitude (though he has not explored the question of basic attitudes as it deserves to be explored). And he claims that it is possible, in terms of these three standpoints and attitudes, to give an intelligible account of the history of philosophy. On the main point of principle he is surely right, though it is certain that his list of types is not definitive and his analysis is not nearly deep enough. I propose now to venture upon a short exposition in his manner, setting side by side four distinct types of *Weltanschauung*, and pointing to the basic attitudes on which they respectively rest. The four views which I shall examine are naturalism or positivism, dialectical materialism, Vedantism, and Christianity. This list is in no way complete or exhaustive, nor were the items chosen on any *a priori* systematic principle. They are simply four types of thought which have exercised and do exercise considerable influence, and all of which I happen to have had occasion to study. They are of course mutually incompatible, and the basic attitudes on which they rest are irreconcilable.

I shall take *naturalism* and *positivism* together, as Dilthey does, because in spite of their differences there is a real affinity between them. The most obvious difference lies in the fact that naturalism is an ontology, whereas positivism is first of all a theory of knowledge. But behind them both a motive is at work which leads to a retreat from theoretical constructions, and especially from speculative theories, towards what is familiar and easily verified.

(a) Naturalism, or 'materialism' as it is sometimes called, rests on a strong sense of 'reality', understanding by 'reality' here that which is unquestioningly accepted as 'real' by the common sense of civilized man. What is it that is so

accepted? The spatio-temporal world and our place in it, our physical relations with it and with one another in and through it. All this is familiar to us, open to observation through all the senses, amenable to human use and control. There is no evidence equally direct and unambiguous for any alleged other realm of being or of experience; and the naturalistic thinker is determined to show that all phenomena and all experiences can be explained in terms of this familiar and therefore reassuring scheme. If he denies the doctrine of 'higher realities' put forward by all religions and many philosophies, it is because those things are not verifiable by ordinary observation, and therefore seem airy, incalculable, insubstantial, explaining nothing and creating endless difficulties and obscurities.

(b) Positivism is a more reflective expression of the same tendency. It looks not primarily for the 'real' in the sense of the familiar, but for the 'knowable', premising that before we can speak of 'knowledge' we must have both tangible evidence and clarity and precision of statement. The paradigm of clarity and precision is of course mathematics, and some philosophers, who have an overmastering passion for clarity and distinctness and a deep repugnance for ambiguity or uncertainty, are apt to fling themselves into the study of mathematics and pure logic to the comparative neglect even of the empirical sciences. The true positivist is not of this type. He knows that mathematical knowledge has purchased its clarity and distinctness at the price of severance from experience. Positivism demands of knowledge that it should be empirical as well as precise; and the solution of this problem is found in the requirement that all knowledge shall be natural science, that all natural science shall speak the language of applied mathematics, and that pure mathematics shall be so interpreted that it gives no countenance to the belief in any 'timeless' world of 'essences' over and above the sensible world in which we live and act. There is often an element of determined negativism in face of anything outside the prescribed range, and the root of this attitude is a deep suspicion, dislike, and ultimately fear of what cannot be clearly formulated and experimentally controlled. Emotive language is used against such things. They are

called 'mysticism' and sometimes 'nonsense'. The fear is a fear of being taken in, of being beguiled by fancies, and there is a not ignoble desire to stick to the verifiable facts of man's position in the world, however thin and meagre may be the picture which they present. *ἐν δὲ φάει καὶ ὄλεσσαν, ἐπεὶ νύ τοι εὐαδεν οὕτως.*

*Dialectical materialism* shares a name with the materialism discussed above, and claims some kind of genealogical relationship with it; but the animating spirit is by no means the same. The dialectical materialist is above all things an activist. He is a materialist, affirming the sole reality of the spatio-temporal world, not because it is the familiar world or the world of the clearly knowable, but because it is the world in which we live and act. Knowledge itself he sees arising in the course, and for the sake, of action; men learn only where they ask questions, ask questions only where they are interested, and are interested only where they see a chance of acting for the satisfaction of some desire. Science is affirmed and exalted, not primarily because it gives clarity but because, through clarity, it gives power. The exercise of this power gives 'freedom', which in the language of dialectical materialism is not a political or legal term but a sociological and even a metaphysical one; it means the control exercised by collective man over his natural environment and over himself, a control which is only possible because of the development of human consciousness, but which results in the transformation of that very consciousness by the changing relations in which man stands to nature and to other men. If the 'higher world' of abstract principles and timeless realities is denied in this philosophy, the denial does not proceed from fear, but from impatience and even anger. Religious and metaphysical beliefs are seen as impediments to the growth of human freedom, and therefore socially as well as intellectually a bad thing. By contrast with the more conventional types of materialism, this doctrine has a splendid imaginative sweep; indeed, in spite of its professions, it must be recognized to contain an ambitious speculative synthesis.

The mind passes readily from the commissar to the yogi, and so from dialectical materialism to the philosophy of the

*Vedanta*. Here too is a vast speculative synthesis, but composed of very different elements, because the purpose behind it is wholly different. Some of its components have their equivalents in our European tradition. *Brahman* is the *substance* of Spinoza, and *atman* is Fichte's *absolute ego*; both represent the metaphysical principle of monism, in terms of the ontological and of the transcendental standpoint respectively. The assertion that *brahman* and *atman* are identical is an attempt to bring the two standpoints together, as in Schelling's *philosophy of identity*. Later, the dialectic by which Sankara shows the nullity of all finite things has something in common with Bradley. Thus the metaphysical machinery of the system is not unfamiliar to us of the West. And the underlying motive? It is a doctrine of beatification by approximation to and ultimate union with the Supreme One. This means that what finally matters in this system is neither things, nor phenomena, nor the whole order of nature, nor processes, nor actions, but the states of the self. First come the states of consciousness: the moral consciousness is a higher state than slavery to ignorance and passion, but contemplation is a higher state than any kind of action. And then we are invited to rise above consciousness altogether, into a state which is analogous rather to a deep sleep, and here the true blessedness is found. This system is as decisively introvert as dialectical materialism is extravert. It is quite impossible to hold the two together; their basic attitudes are irreconcilable.

*Christianity*, as has been said, maintains its own version of the doctrine of degrees of being or reality; and in its own way it is a doctrine of beatification by union with Him Who Is. Its deepest note, however, is personalism, the belief that personal relationships matter more than anything else. Many secular humanists would agree with this in words, but they would think of personal relationships in terms of moral action, personal friendship, cultural exchanges, &c., all under the conditions of man's life on earth. Christianity, believing in all this in its own degree, nevertheless goes farther and carries the principle on into a higher region. God himself is conceived in unambiguously personal terms, and personal relationships are contained within the divine

nature itself. Man is made for personal relationships with God, and relations between men should flow from and reflect their relations with God. Although contemplation *per se* is recognized to be a higher state than action *per se*, the good life both here and hereafter is conceived to include elements of both, just as man himself would not be more, but less his true self if he had no body. There is therefore a kind of qualified activism at the heart of Christianity, but it is incompatible with the activism of the dialectical materialist. Its ultimate aims lie beyond this life though not beyond human life altogether, and its ruling value is 'charity' where that of dialectical materialism is 'freedom' in the sense which has been defined. Working for different ends and relying on different forces to bring them about, the Christian and the dialectical materialist can never find themselves allies except *per accidens*, for a limited time and a limited purpose.

What I wish to emphasize above all with regard to these systems (and others like them) is their mutual incompatibility. This is most clearly seen when we take them as wholes. There is of course a vast body of facts which must be acknowledged by any philosophical or religious system whatsoever. There are also interpretative principles and value-judgements which can find a place in more than one such system, perhaps in several. To that extent the systems are of course not windowless towards one another. But what counts in a system such as these is not the details which are included in it, so much as the order in which it arranges them, the kind of priorities which it establishes among them—in a word, its total structure; and that depends on the purpose underlying it, the basic attitude of which it is the intellectual expression. The systems differ, and their differences are intractable, because their basic attitudes differ, and are in mutual conflict.

Such systems are logically watertight; if you take up your position firmly within one of them, you can turn the edge of any objection that may be brought against it. There is a Christian interpretation of any facts or alleged facts which may be brought as evidence against Christianity; just as there are several non-Christian interpretations of those facts or alleged facts which are brought forward as evidence in

support of Christianity. To one who is a Christian, his own interpretations are bound to seem the natural and obvious ones, and the others will appear forced and unreasonable; while to one who is not a Christian the reverse will appear to be the case. For this reason, argument between adherents of such conflicting systems is usually a mere beating of the air. Each participant remains at the end where he was at the beginning, only marvelling at the unreasonableness of his opponent. On those occasions where a man does yield to arguments against his system or in support of another, it is because he has already, perhaps unconsciously, begun to take up a standpoint outside his system. From that outside standpoint he is able to see the point of arguments which would mean little to him so long as he remained inside; and the result may be that a rival interpretation of experience gradually builds itself up in his mind, until he is compelled to choose between it and his older view. It is in this way that transitions from system to system take place. They involve far more than a change of opinion on a number, even a large number, of particular points. They involve a change of standpoint, a change of mental structure, a change of basic attitude. They are rightly called 'conversions'.

For a frank recognition of these things we have to look outside those passages of philosophical literature which are commonly studied in the universities. We may find hints of the truth in Kant. He gives us an example of standpoint-analysis in his account of the antinomies, and when he argues that 'reason' has an 'interest' in certain views he is implicitly going behind standpoint to attitude. His doctrine of the primacy of practical reason, and certain remarks in the *Critique of Judgment*, embody a recognition that there are things which will not be seen by, and arguments which will not carry weight with, one who is not seriously committed to the moral life. In Kant these are no more than scattered hints; in Fichte the underlying principle is explicitly stated. In his *Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre* of 1797 he says that there are, for a consistent thinker, only two philosophies, viz. that of Spinoza and Fichte's own. Which of these a man holds will depend on the kind of man he is. If he is a man of moral principle and passion, he will under-

stand what is meant by freedom, and will adhere to the philosophy of freedom, which is Fichte's. If his moral interests are weak, if something else, such as the pursuit of happiness or the scientific study of nature, dominates his thinking, he will be a determinist, and that means a Spinozist. Fichte himself had been a determinist for a time, but could not reconcile determinism with his own consciousness of moral freedom and responsibility. He learned from Kant how a philosophy could be constructed which gave to practical reason and the consciousness of freedom a clear primacy over those considerations on which determinism relies. The change of view which this discovery made possible was a real conversion; and for the rest of his life Fichte was dedicated to the purpose of working out in its full extent the philosophy of freedom which Kant had merely shown to be possible.

Or we may consider Kierkegaard. He had grown up in an atmosphere of romantic optimism, among people who believed that everything in life is harmonious or can be made so if only there is good will. The Hegelian philosophy, with its claim to bring all differences into a final synthesis, was the intellectual counterpart of this optimism. But Kierkegaard found in real life that it is not merely a question of good will. There are real oppositions, real incompatibilities, and to choose one thing is after all to reject another. To pretend to do in the world of thought what cannot be done in life is merely to let one's thought get out of touch with life. And so was launched the revolt which replaced the philosophy of synthesis by the uncompromising philosophy of either-or. Kierkegaard's 'philosophy' is not an academic discipline, advancing solutions of intellectual problems in a systematic logical order. It is what a later generation chose to call *Lebensphilosophie*, a description of human life which uses all the author's psychological insight and dramatic power for the purpose of making certain fundamental problems unmistakably clear. There are alternative patterns of life and thought, each of which is unintelligible from the standpoint of the others, and there is no *logical* road from one to another. There is a road, but it is the road of choice, made as it must be by one who knows that he is moving in the



dark, and that nothing less than himself, his future character and life, hangs on the venture. Life is like that, and the choice between fundamentally different attitudes and standpoints is like that. It is unpleasant to those who would like to work it all out as a theorem, or to present a clear and distinct solution of the problem; but it is the real predicament of man.

Some, I know, will be unable to follow the course which this lecture has been taking without grave uneasiness. They would very much prefer to keep the will out of the theory of knowledge, where its introduction seems to threaten all kinds of confusion. But it cannot be kept out. There is no knowing without thinking, and no thinking without the thinker, who is not a pure, bodiless, contemplative intellect, but a living, desiring, acting human being.

It is true that philosophers, conditioned by a logical training, have often hesitated to push their inquiries far beyond the limits of logic. It is easy to see why. Logic is in itself a wide field of work, and gives ample opportunity for progressive discovery. It allows and even demands the intellectual virtues of clarity and precision, and gives scope for pride in clean workmanship. By contrast with it, a philosophy of volition and basic attitudes may well appear as a different world and a less inviting one, obscure, lacking in clearly defined terms and recognized landmarks. There is no denying this. And yet logic by itself is incapable of providing an adequate theory of knowledge. It is concerned only with the mechanics of thinking. It tells us how, *if* we know one thing, we can pass from it to the knowledge of other things. It shows us how, as a formal exercise, we can work out a deductive system from any set of definitions and axioms we like to take, providing that the definitions are clear and the axioms not mutually inconsistent. As for knowing about reality, or formulating true and well-grounded propositions about the existing world, logic tells us that in order to do this we require both facts of observation and principles by which to interpret and co-ordinate these facts. But logic, so long as it concerns itself with the mechanics of thinking, cannot tell us any way to be certain of our facts or our principles. If there is a dispute between two rival sets of prin-

ciples, which both enable us to make sense of the world, but not the same sense, logic cannot judge of the dispute. If there is a question whether the body of propositions which results from applying one particular set of principles is to be accepted as a satisfactory interpretation of experience and a genuine contribution to knowledge, logic cannot determine the question. For these are questions not of the mechanics of thinking, but of the will to think, and to think in a particular way. The answer to such questions is not a demonstration, but a choice, and if it is supported by argument, the argument must be of the character of a persuasion, an inducement. Logicians have in fact often ventured into this field, and, in addition to performing their essential task of analysing, have undertaken to judge and to prescribe. But when logic undertakes to do this, it ceases to be a science and becomes a normative discipline, subject to all the divergences of view which naturally prevail in the realm of ends and values. If Bosanquet and Wittgenstein, Russell and Gentile, disagree as to whether certain things are knowledge or not, it is because they have different truth-paradigms, and a different kind of will to think.

Some will fight against acknowledging this because they fear that it will open the door to 'irrationalism'. This is an emotive word, and we must try to discount the emotion and separate out the thing which arouses it. When people raise the bogey of 'irrationalism' or a 'flight from reason', what do they mean by 'reason', and why should we be so eager to safeguard it?

Is 'reason' here being used in its original sense, as in the Latin *ratio*? Does it mean discursive reasoning, the activity which logic shows us how to perfect? Then what does 'irrationalism' mean? Are we supposed to be disparaging discursive reasoning, or suggesting that it should be superseded in its proper function by something else—by 'feeling', or 'intuition', or who knows what? But of course we have made no such suggestion. What we have said is that, as a matter of fact, discursive reasoning is not a primary source of truth. It cannot be; for we cannot begin to reason until we have accepted some facts and principles, which will be the basis for our reasoning. So will, in the form of interest,

attention, and acceptance, goes before *ratio* and determines its possibility. This is a fact, and the refusal to face it is itself 'irrational' in the sense that it is based on unthinking fear.

Or does the charge of 'irrationalism' mean that, according to our doctrine, anyone can believe anything he chooses, and therefore all beliefs are alike 'arbitrary'? There are really two questions here.

(a) It is not true in fact that a man can think what he likes, merely by choosing to think it. The possibilities of choice in this matter are narrowly circumscribed, and the choice, where it exists, is not unmotivated. If it is true that a man's choices determine what he will be for the future, it is equally true that they reveal what he is in the present; and in the end a man has *no* choice except to be less or more consistent in what he is.

(b) But it is true that men, being different, choose differently; and here comes the real problem. Is there any criterion, other than our personal likings, by which we can judge that one man has chosen rightly and another man wrongly? Is there a sense in which we can argue that one basic attitude is more 'reasonable' than another? Is there a conception of the 'reasonable' which can make some claim to general acceptance? If not, there can be no reasoned judgement on attitudes and standpoints, and no normative discussion of them, and metaphysics must collapse into type-psychology.

It is useless to seek a criterion in *consistency*. Of course any standpoint and any attitude must be self-consistent if it is to be a candidate for consideration at all. But that does not help us to decide between those standpoints and attitudes which are rival candidates.

It is useless to appeal to *common sense*, whatever we may mean by that hard-worked phrase. In its most frequent use, 'common sense' means that body of beliefs and assumptions about the world, in terms of which mankind everywhere tacitly agrees to conduct the everyday affairs of life. But this body of beliefs and assumptions has grown up to serve a purely practical purpose, and can only hold together so long as fundamental questions are not raised. Every serious inquiry, scientific, philosophical, or theological, has to begin by leaving it behind. Or perhaps by 'common sense' here we may

mean the *consensus gentium*, the general agreement of mankind as to what basic attitudes are 'reasonable'. But there is no such consensus; that is why we have a problem here. Or we could mean by 'common sense' a generally accepted, or at least generally acceptable, *criterion* of 'reasonableness'. Yes, but what generally acceptable criterion is there? That is just what we are asking.

Could the test be a *practical* one? But then what does 'practical' mean? It might have something to do with 'pragmatic' and 'pragmatism', and these are words of ill omen. They suggest the amateurish excursions of William James into philosophy. Worse, they suggest a mentality which brings intellectual and spiritual issues to the test of material results, and of these too in the short rather than in the long run. 'Pragmatism' in this sense is of course not a fit test for basic attitudes; it rather presupposes that one such attitude—that of the self-styled 'practical man'—has been accepted.

Let us dismiss the unlucky adjective 'practical' and consider whether there may not be something in the nature of an *existential* test. What do I mean by this? I mean that what we should ask of a principle, of a standpoint, of an attitude, is that it should open up possibilities of life, experience, and activity. I gave an example in my first lecture of the working of such a test: it is the test used by Kant and later by Collingwood to justify the acceptance of absolute principles, and of a particular set of such principles. Their justification lies in the fact that, if they are accepted, they open up a field of inquiry in which progressive discoveries can be made. In this way our powers are liberated and given scope for free exercise, and the content of our experience is enriched. We ourselves are different in mind and outlook in consequence of it, the quality of our life is to that extent changed; and this is why I have adopted the term 'existential' to describe this kind of test.

The example I have given concerns intellectual principles, and finds their justification in their power to stimulate and guide intellectual activity and so to enrich our experience. If this is accepted as a valid test, we must give our preference, as between rival standpoints and attitudes, to that which opens up the possibilities of intellectual life



most widely. If there is a standpoint which is able to make use of, and stimulate purposeful inquiries within, a world of discourse which a rival standpoint can only dismiss as meaningless or at least as mere subjective fantasy, this difference must be recognized as a decisive point in favour of the former standpoint. The view which can take things positively must prevail over that which can only explain them away. Provided, of course, that it really does take things positively, that it does not merely repeat evocative phrases, but sets going a genuine discussion among people who understand one another's language and can speak to the point; provided, in short, that it offers an open frontier for exploration and a logical and linguistic equipment for the explorer.

The same test can also be applied to practical principles, e.g. in the sphere of morality. Dilthey remarks in one place that the failure to observe one of the fundamental moral principles will have the effect of shutting a man out from some worth-while sphere of human association and joint activity. That is our test, put in a negative form. And the same question must be addressed to any religious system which invites consideration. What kind of endeavours, leading by what stages to what ultimate end, does this system throw open to its disciples? What new dimension does it add to life and experience? The Christian at any rate should not find this question unfamiliar; for his own tradition offers itself as a way (or rather, as *the* way) to fullness of life. In applying our test to Christianity, therefore, we shall not be judging it by any extraneous standard, we shall simply be asking it to make good its own claims.

Will this 'existential' principle be accepted by everyone? Hardly. It would be accepted by most Europeans, probably, if once they fairly understood it; but there are people in the world who would question it, at least in words, and perhaps in their hearts also. There is no *logical* reason why they should not question it; for the proposition, that fullness of life is something to be sought, is not self-evident. The most one can say is that anyone who does question our criterion shows thereby that he is not a whole-hearted life-affirmer. It is not possible by dint of *reasons* to turn him into one.

But will our principle at least bring about a philosophical

agreement among those who do accept it? No, it will not. For though it is easy to accept, it is by no means easy to apply. It means taking upon oneself the laborious and delicate task of understanding, in order to compare, different attitudes and their equivalent standpoints; and the comparison, when we come to make it, is between imponderables. A man cannot even attempt to judge what he knows he does not understand; and where he does judge, the understanding at the basis of his judgement may well be imperfect. Moreover, it is probable that no one is wholly unprejudiced in these matters. We all have our strong attractions, our aversions, and (very deep-rooted) our fears and suspicions, which prevent us from considering, or from considering fairly, important bodies of thought. It is hard to exaggerate the extent to which our thinking, even in philosophy, is governed by negativistic attitudes, which deny a part of life in that they deny full readiness to understand. In short, our powers are limited at the best, and we can rarely bring ourselves to do our best with them.

One thing which emerges clearly from all this discussion is that the determinants of belief lie at least as much in the region of character as in that of intelligence. And from this it follows that belief is a moral act, for which the believer is to be held responsible. This does not, of course, apply directly to every belief a man holds, from basic principles all the way down to points of detail. There comes a point where, granted a man's principles, and granted the experiential evidence which he has to interpret in the light of these principles, only one conclusion is reasonably possible for him. It is in the principles themselves, in a man's standpoint and the attitudes underlying it, that the ethical character of his thinking properly resides. It is ethical in the deepest sense. In adopting such and such basic attitudes, he determines what kind of a world can exist for him, what the quality and structure of experience shall be for him, what life itself shall be for him and for those who come under his influence. He determines whether, and in what ways, he is to be a source of enrichment or of impoverishment to human life and experience generally. And, because thinking has this ethical character, there is a place in moral theory for a

discussion of the ethics of thinking. It is true that moralists in general have neglected to do this part of their work.

I have spoken from the standpoint of my own ethic, which is that of the affirmation of life. But I have already acknowledged that there is no reason to expect everyone to embrace this standpoint. And if not, there can be no reason to expect a general agreement on the ethics of thinking, or on the judgement to be passed on individual thinkers. Why, in fact, should philosophers and people in general agree more in this branch of ethics than they do in others?

If this be our true situation, what is the reasonable thing to do in it? No other than what we actually do in real life. In the last resort, human life is a tangled web of action and interaction, woven by the diverse wills of men. All achievements and all relationships are products of will, and of a relation between wills. All disputes arise from divergences of will, and are laid to rest when the divergence is brought to an end. The intellectual life is no enclave apart from all this action and interaction. But the *quality* of life in any society depends on *how* the impact of will on will takes place. It may be by force and external constraint; a wasteful method, dear to the impatient and the unimaginative, but not to those who really understand and respect life. And it should be added that suggestion, propaganda, psychological conditioning are forms of external constraint no less than the use of physical power. But if these methods are rejected, there is nothing left but understanding and persuasion. If we do not work by *βία*, it must be by *πειθώ*. It is a process which will go on for a long time, as long indeed as the world endures, and there is no reason to think that it will ever bring us to agreement; only it will ensure that, in our disagreements, we at least behave as human beings. The true humanist is he who is concerned to create and maintain the conditions in which the process of mutual understanding and persuasion can go on.

If this is the point to which philosophical analysis ultimately brings us, let us end by asking the question with which we began: in what relation does all this stand to Christianity? Has Christianity a distinctive and useful word to speak to our condition?

Christianity has always known that there is an ethic of thinking, that men can, and therefore ought to, discipline their minds, and that they are accountable for every idle thought or word. The Christian ethic of thinking is part of the Christian ethic in general, and partakes of that complex and dialectical character which is so distinctive of Christianity. (a) The Christian ethic begins with the proposition that man is created in order to live in close fellowship with God. The basic attitudes which Christianity demands of us are those which are necessary to this relationship. Among them must obviously be included those attitudes which make possible the belief in God's existence. In the ancient Christian doctrine of the natural law, the recognition of God's existence and of our duties towards him is included along with our duties to our fellow men; and that this represents the genuine Christian view of the matter is, I think, beyond serious question. (b) But Christianity goes on to say that man as we know him is a fallen creature, alienated from his true condition, and no longer able to perform unaided those functions for which he was created. His will is perverted and his intellect is darkened. In view of this there can be from the Christian point of view no surprise at the endless diversity of attitudes and standpoints which men in fact take up. This confusion, and the mutual unintelligibility and indifference which prevail so widely between types of people, are what we should expect in a world which was fallen as Christianity says it is. (c) Christianity adds that there is a way by which man can be restored to his proper state and function, but not by his own effort or contrivance. The solution can only be found in God's intervention to restore what has been ruined. What is true of human life in general is true of the intellectual life in particular. The salvation of man as a thinking being can come only by the intervention of God to recreate the intellect of man; and this intervention cannot be effective except as it is welcomed and accepted by the human will. The perpetual problem of grace and nature, of divine power and human freedom, raises its head here.

We are not concerned with that problem. What does concern us is to take note how the Christian analysis of the

situation, and of what needs to be done in it, is conceived in similar terms to the analysis which we ourselves have already made. The dependence of the intellect on the will is clearly recognized, and the power of basic attitudes to open the eyes of the mind or to keep them closed. The only hope of escape from our present confusion is seen to lie in the opening of the mind to a new influence which is to bring understanding. The difference is (and it is a capital one) that whereas we in our philosophical analysis could only appeal to the interaction of human minds upon human minds in circumstances of mutual respect and forbearance, Christianity is able to bring in a decisive new factor in the enlightening action of God.

What shall we, as philosophers in the twentieth century, say of this? We are not like our predecessors in the heyday of metaphysics, who supposed that they had demonstrated the existence of God by their own methods, and could therefore recognize the action of God upon men's minds as something perfectly possible and perhaps even to be expected. For us the relation between philosophy and Christian theology is not as close as that, nor is the relation closest at that point. It is not in the metaphysical possibility of divine grace, but in the nature of the work which it is called in to perform, that we can most readily find common language with Christianity. We must own that, whether the Christian claims be true or not, they are at any rate singularly to the point. The Christian conception of sin accounts very well, in its own terms, for the intractable situation in which we find ourselves, and the Christian doctrine of restoration is, whether true or not, an admirably conceived solution of our problem. Whether it is in fact true, is perhaps not (Christians will say, is certainly not) for philosophy to judge. But the work of recent philosophy on the lines described in these lectures makes it more evident than ever before how aptly it speaks to our condition.